

THE BIRTH OF THE
Australia's magazine of the performing arts.

June 1980 \$1.95*

Theatre Australia

Circuz Oz
His Majesty's Perth Open

Colin George Departs
Tasmanian Puppets Closed



**SYDNEY DANCE
COMPANY -
NEW SEASON**



SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY
PREMIERE SEASON 1980

THESE LAMBY SOUTH 1980-1981 JAN.
 CLOSE OF PLAY 1981 FEB-MARCH
 NO NAMES, NO BLACK MOUNTAIN 1981-1982
 IT'S SETTING UP A FATHER 1982-1983 APRIL
 AND TAKING IT ON THE ROAD 1983-1984 MAY
 GRAND DE BERGERACE 1984-1985 JUNE
 MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR 1985-1986 JULY
 THE FRIENDS WOMAN 1986-1987 AUG.



Theatre Australia

JUNE 1988, VOLUME 4, NO. 11.

DEPARTMENTS

3/COMMENT

4/INFO

5/WHISPERS, RUMOURS AND FACTS/*Norman Russell*

45/GUIDE (THEATRE, DANCE, OPERA, CONCERTS)

SPOTLIGHT

18/CIRCUS OZ/*Lucy Wagner*

12/COLIN GEORGE DEPARTS/*Ron Blair*

13/TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE/*Cateyyn Robinson*

FEATURES

14/SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY/*Jim Sykes*

14/HIS MAJESTY'S PERTH

INTERNATIONAL

18/UK: IN FAVOUR OF THE OLD SCHOOL/*Lesley Wardle*

19/USA: LATE OF TENNESSEE/*Karl Leven*

20/ITI FUTURE EVENTS

DANCE

21/BERLIN BALLET, PRAGUE BALLET, RAYMONDA/*William Sheehybridge*

FILM

25/BREAKER MORANT/*Elizabeth Riddell*

OPERA

26/THREEPENNY OPERA AND DON GIOYANNE/*David Gyger*

REVIEWS

29/ACT/STRAWBERRY FIELDS, OUT AT SEA/*Kyle Wilson*

30/NSW/CLOUDS/*Robert Page*

NO NAMES ... NO PACKDRILL/*Lucy Wagner*

ABSENT FRIENDS, MEASURE FOR MEASURE/*Barry O'Connor*

HAPPY FAMILY/*Michelle Field*

34/QID/VANITIES, ANGEL CITY/*Veronica Kelly*

PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD, IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST/*Jeremy Ridgman*

36/SA/THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR, RODIES/*Michael Marley*

32/VIC/COMEDIANS/*Susanne Spenser*

BANANA BENDER, MANSON/*Catherine Peake*

41/WA/THE TAMING OF THE SHREW/*Colin O'Brien*

42/TAS/GLASS MENAGERIE, MINSTREL SHOW/*Bruce Cornelius*

BOOKS

44/CANADA: EXPRESSION OF A COUNTRY/*John McCallum*

June
offer
only

Currency's Stocktaking Sale



Three companions to the British Theatre:

EDWARD BOND, A COMPANION TO THE PLAYS Malcolm Hay and Philip Roberts	\$9.95	\$ 7.00
BERTOLT BRECHT IN BRITAIN Introduced by John Willett	\$5.00	\$ 4.25
PINTER: A BIBLIOGRAPHY Rudiger Imhof	\$4.00	\$ 3.50

Sale prices include postage to all States

The following reading sets (number of characters plus two) are on offer at cost during June only. Further copies may be purchased at unit cost.

MAKASSAR REEF Buzo	\$3.75	10 @ \$1.50	\$15.00
THE CHAPEL PERILOUS Hewitt	\$1.00	15 @ \$1.00	\$15.00
A HARD GOD Kenna	\$3.90	5 @ \$1.50	\$13.50
THE DOLL TRILOGY Lawler	\$13.50	9 @ \$5.00	\$45.00
THE CHOCOLATE FROG, THE OLD FAMILIAR JUICE McNeil	\$3.75	5 @ \$1.60	\$ 8.00
THE CAKE MAN Merritt	\$3.50	10 @ \$1.50	\$15.00
INNER VOICES Nowra	\$1.95	16 @ \$1.50	\$24.00
BEDFELLOWS Oakley	\$1.90	5 @ \$1.50	\$ 7.00
FOR VALOUR Thrissell	\$1.95	18 @ \$1.50	\$27.00



Send orders with remittance before June 30 to:
Currency Press Pty. Ltd.
87 Jersey Road, Woollahra, NSW 2025

COMMENT

FROM THEATRE TO FILM

Seven of our top theatre directors, Richard Wherrett, Rex Cramphorn, George Whalley, Kerry Dwyer, Malcolm Robertson, Mick Rodger and Aaron Norris, are facing their first real test in film.

Now the shorts that have been a culmination of a crash course at the Film and Television School are in preview stage. From the start of this baptism by fire it was envisaged with investment from the Australian Film Commission and Greater Union, that at least some of them should go on commercial release.

Despite the nervousness of having their first efforts transmuted on celluloid, the directors have found the experience, in Mick Rodger's word, "marvellous". Julia Donovan of AFTVS somehow managed the tightest margins of funding, lost time in seven very heavy schedules and the films themselves were co-written by Tony Buckley, one of the best producers in the country.

All the time of writing only four films were available for preview, but already John Reid, the General Manager of GUGO Film Distributors, is "very thrilled". He and I both agree that in terms of polish, interest and performance, Richard Wherrett's film *The Girl Who Met Sweeney* at Rosemount in Paris, based on a short story by Frank Macrowood, is of the four the most outstanding so far. A daunting tale takes a wry and arduous study of what might loosely be described as the war of the sexes.

In that film, and George Whalley's moving and perceptive view of a migrant adolescence, *Summer*, the hoped for strength that theatre people would bring to film making, evoking fuller performances, has obviously paid off.

Kerry Dwyer has skillfully managed to bring an air of Melbourne's ramshackle rough theatre to the screen, in her successful film *The Wedding*. Rex Cramphorn once again worked with writer Louis Nowra on the supernatural tale *81 Night*.

With an Alex Ross scripted film by Aaron Norris, an Alan Hinggan comedy by Malcolm Robertson and Mick Rodger's *Box Office* a Chance, a historical drama which he has uniquely written and directed himself, yet to come, an obvious range and diversity of product has resulted from the experiment.

Though it is in relatively dry, Julia Reid is producing that commercial release will go ahead. Already screenings are arranged for the Sydney Film Festival, with negotiations for the Melbourne Festival

currently in hand.

Such an ambitious venture has not been without its problems. Rumblings from those already established in the industry were suggesting that the whole exercise was a waste of money. Or that if these theatre directors really wanted to try their hand they should have been put through the full three year course at the School, impossible for people with such heavy commitments to the stage.

Commercial release itself throws up such problems as extra money for the well known actors involved — Kate Fitzpatrick, Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Anna Vekic, John Clayton to name but a few — who worked for minimal AFTVS educational rates.

Deeper criticism and problems the idea instigated by GJ Brunsley, recently appointed head of the Australian Film Commission, has paid off. Many of the directors, their appetites whetted, want to continue, though are humble enough not to see one short as indicating fully fledged status as film makers. Mick Rodger, for instance, has secured script development money from the AFDC and is looking to return for the backing to direct the film himself.

His suggestion, thanking of people like Jim Sharman alone in this country, and Peter Brook and Uspensky Andersen in Europe, is that the exchange should continue. Now, he says, the AFTVS (or perhaps MIDA) should find the money for film directors to try their hand in theatre. A late night conversation with Fred Schepers revealed that he felt as inadequate and daunted by stage work as Mick Rodger by film.

Perhaps this is the beginning of a whole new cross-fertilisation of film and theatre, with directors moving between the two with the same ease that actors have from the very beginning.



Robert Page, Editor

Theatre Australia

Editor Robert Page
Executive Editor Lucy Maguire
Publishing Consultant Philip Morris
Art Director Jack Applebury
Subscriptions Manager Ann Campbell

ADVERTISING BOARD

John Bell, Suzanne Brandel, Ben Carson, Katherine Brinkley, Victor Chalky, Michael Corbett, A. Forster, Jack Hinchson, Ron Hunter, Gailine Hutchinson, John Newby, Phil Newer, Raymond O'Connor, Philip Parsons, Thomas Sharpe, Ken Southgate, Raymond Sander, Elizabeth Swearing, Martin Thurnick, John Tremain, Dave French, Gailene Waddy, Richard Wherrett.

ADVERTISING

Solo Advertising Representatives
The Globe Bridge Company
114 Parkside Road, Waverley NSW 2060
Telephone: (02) 41 1349

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

A.C.B. Kyle Wilson (06) 39 1111
N.S.W. Editors (06) 57 4476
Vic. Suzanne Spencer (03) 477 2414
Qld. Don Buchanan (07) 358 1016
W.A. Joan Anderson (08) 298 4670
T.A. Sue Vire (08) 289 2038

Editor, Australia generally, acknowledges the financial assistance of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council and the Executive Board of the Australia Council, the New South Wales Cultural Affairs Advisory Council, the Arts Council, Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Arts and Design Council, the Victorian Ministry of the Arts, the Western Australian Arts Council and the assistance of the University of Newcastle.

STAFF REPORTERS

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be forwarded to the editorial office: 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield N.S.W. 2004 (Telephone: (06) 57 4476)

Wherever, even, are taken of manuscripts and visual material supplied for the magazine, the publishers and editors accept no liability for loss of damage, which may occur. Unpublished manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Opinions expressed in signed articles are not necessarily those of the editor.

NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

The subscription rate is \$20.00 per issue within Australia. Cheques should be made payable to Theatre Australia and posted to Theatre Publications Ltd, 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield N.S.W. 2004.

For current rates and conditions, telephone rates see page 81.

Where local rates are published by Theatre Publications Ltd, 80 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, N.S.W. 2004 (Telephone: (06) 57 4476). Distributed by subscription and through dealers for every two issues of Publications Ltd and to newspapers throughout Australia by Allen Rodley Wright.

Theatre Australia is produced by Southgate Publishing Pty Ltd (Telephone: (02) 5 0000) in association with Publications Ltd (Telephone: (02) 5 0000). The magazine is printed by APM Presses, Alexandria.

Theatre Publications Ltd. All rights reserved except where specified. The copy price is maximum remuneration and retail price only. Registered for postage as a printed matter.

I N F O

FRAM FACTORY HANGING ON... On Monday May 5 Sir Billy Sneddon launched the Friends of the Fram Factory's public fundraising Appeal to save the building — and hence the company — from the auctioneer's hammer. They need (at the time of writing) to raise \$60,000 by May 29, auction day, so be able to put a deposit on the building and so gain another forty five days to come up with the rest of the cash.

One of the arguments used by Sir Billy Sneddon in support of the Fram was that the more Opera Houses and Art Centres that are built, the more need there is for the rougher spaces too. The cultural centres are wonderful places for lavish displays and very necessary at such, but it is not expected that any innovative work should come out of them, the more we put up edifices, the more there is

a need for original material to fill them, but that can only come out of such places as the APG.

John Timlin, Co-ordinator of the Friends of the Fram, is optimistic about eventual private sector support. The Australia Council Theatre Board and Victorian Ministry of the Arts are sympathetic, but do not have capital funds, however, the APG is firmly on both bodies' list of contending grant organisations. Timlin does not anticipate any direct Government intervention to save the building.

If it can be bought, the plan is to build a 400-seat theatre within it to be used as an income-generating source. The APG itself would only use it for extended seasons of such highly popular shows as *The Hills Family Show*, but other producers and theatre companies would be invited to rent it as a touring venue.



John Timlin also has plans to move community radio station JBRR of which he is a director, into the Fram as a further source of rent income. He feels that \$70,000 cash flow per year needs to be generated from use of the property.

So far the Appeal is going well, the first three days saw \$3,000 roll in and there has

been enormous support from members and companies of the theatre profession.

The money is still desperately needed. All cheques should be made out to Friends of the Fram and sent to The Fram Factory, 323 Drummond Street, Carlton, Vic 3053.



James Ridswood

DESIGNING MINDS II... The Designers Association in the Performing Arts aims to promote and protect the role

of the designer in theatre, television and film and to heighten both professional and public appreciation of their work. It is based in

Sydney with a committee of ten headed by Bill Pasmore, at the moment they have about sixty five members — designers from all round the country.

In May 78 DAPA held its first exhibition, entitled *Designing Moments* in the Exhibition Hall of the Opera House, to which some 25,000 viewers went. Now they have a second one coming up which will open on August 15 in the same venue.

It will be divided into three sections, theatre, television and film and the major aim will be to show the process of design, from drawings to models through to actual costumes. Some of those on show will be James Ridswood's for MTC's

Alchemur, The Triumph of Honour by Peter Cook for the Opera, four from the Sydney Theatre Company.

Arthur Dicks' *David's Dangle*, Yoko Tani's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, Wendy Dickson's *Lady of the Cambray* and Vicki Feincher's *Susan, Susan Nimrod* will be represented by *Baller's House* designs by Michael Pierce and the audio-visual show on *Travelling North*.

From television, Roger Cook's *A Taste To Melba* designs will be on view and Andrew Blackland's *Topique*. Bill Pasmore is once more designing the whole exhibition, which is rumoured to be even more splendid than the last one.

AUSTRALIAN SILENT EPIC FOUND... A print of the only silent movie "epic" made in Australia, the 1927 production of *For The Term of His Natural Life*, has been found in the USA and given to the National Library. The film, whose producers boasted of its cost of thousands, was the longest, most expensive and one of the most successful films made in this country.

The print was found by the American Film Institute in Washington. Although it is of a shortened version made for the American market, it will enable the Library to reconstruct an almost complete copy of the full length film, using also an

incomplete print it has been holding for fifteen years. Some of the most dramatic scenes, including the burning of a convict ship and the suicide of two boy convicts, were among those missing, but are contained in the American print.

Based on the Marcus Clark novel about an Englishman wrongly convicted of murder and transported to the Tasmanian penal settlement of Port Arthur, *The Term* was made by Australasian Films Ltd. It cost £80,000, required a special railway to be built in Tasmania and took six months to produce. It was filmed in Sydney, Newcastle, Port Arthur and

other locations in Tasmania.

The film's stars, Eva Novak and George Fehér, and its director Norman Dawn were imported from America; they are virtually forgotten today, but Dawn was responsible for introducing a number of new techniques into the Australian film industry.

The Term... was an instant success in Australia, but in America its release clashed with the advent of the talkies. It had its premiere screening at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle on June 22, 1927 and there was a song of the same name written to accompany its release.



Kenneth Evans and Helen Richards

HANDSPAN THEATRE is a Melbourne based performing company. It is actively involved in presenting to both children and adults new and original works using mask, mime and music, and most importantly, puppetry.

Handspan administrators and designers Helen Richards and Kenneth Evans will be attending 1980 World Puppetry Festival in Washington DC this month, organised by the American branch of UNIMA (Union Internationale de la Marionnette). The Washington Conference will provide the venue for the first international performance by Handspan of *The Sun up of Berkeleys Creek*, a two-hander by Jerry Wagner. The Handspan contingent will then go on to a study tour of three months duration (courtesy of the Myer Foundation), looking at puppetry in Europe and England.

The seven remaining members of the company will continue to present the two shows currently in repertoire here: *The Mouth Show* and *The Sunup*. The two pieces are performed in kindergartens, schools, libraries, parks, streets and for special occasions.



The cast of thousands for *The Term*... included many now anonymous actors and actresses playing character roles

I N F O

OVERSEAS PRODUCTIONS... 1980 seems to be the year for Australian plays in Britain, though not with any resounding success so far. For the story of *The Club* in London, see Norman Kessel's column on page 9. The Nottingham Playhouse put on a production of David Allen's *Game With Harch* in March, which had a critically good reception, but sadly the audiences stayed away in droves.

Let's hope this is not the fate of the Ensemble-at-the-Stables production of George Hutchinson's *No Room For Dreamers*, a play

similar in style to *Harch* (but about a less well known (especially to English audiences) character *Dreamers* will be the first Australian export under the World Theatre Exchange Programme since the Trust and Clavin combined to administer the programme.

The production will tour provincial centres in England with performances at both the Edinburgh and Dublin Festivals and will also give a couple in Amsterdam on the way back. Perhaps they'll meet up with Circus Oz who are also off to Edinburgh and Amsterdam.

LA BOITE'S NEW SEASON is green over exclusively to Australian plays, and very propitious too: office work they have all proved. Two musicals are the Roddy Ellis *Legend of King O'Malley*, which hasn't been seen on a stage for some years, and Dorothy Hewitt's latest and most popular work *The Man*

From *MacLagan*

As the first producer of a Stephen Sewell play it's fitting that they should be putting on his now highly popular *Travellers*, and the season is completed with two South Australian pieces. Rob George's *Let's Trust Again* and David Allen's *Dickinson*.



Stephen Sewell



Mick Rodger

MAD DOG GOES HOME... RTC The Rivernina Trucking Company in association with the Arts Council of NSW, is presently touring its world premiere production of Mick Rodger's *The Pariah Dog*. Directed by Peter Barclay and Ken Molloy, the play traces the life of the infamous bushranger Daniel "Mad Dog" Morgan. The unique aspect of this undertaking is that the production will tour many of the areas in which the action of the play is set. It is the most extensive tour yet undertaken by the RTC in

its four year history, taking in the southern and central regions of NSW.

Barclay elaborates: "It has been fascinating to rehearse at such places as Morgan's lookout to get a sense of the country as he must have seen it. Though I don't want to suggest that *The Pariah Dog* is more documentary rather it uses the historical context to focus on the perennial conflict between the individual and authority."

The Pariah Dog is the second play in the RTC's 1980 season, the first, *Boys On the Beach* played to capacity houses.

FROM CON... After working in the world of subsidised theatre for the past few years, two new faces have stepped into the commercial jungle to form their own entrepreneurial company. Jon Nicholls, who worked as Director of Activities with the Arts Council of SA and Adrian Bohm, Publishing Officer with the State Theatre Company, are the founders of the Promcon Corporation.

Based in Adelaide, Promcon's main business is to mount and promote concert and theatrical attractions both in South Australia and other states, in some cases acting as entrepreneur and in others publishing for other interstate or overseas impresarios.

Nicholls and Bohm are not new to the business of promoting the arts. Jon Nicholls worked with the Arts Council for four years and was responsible for bringing to Australia Pam Ayres, Nola Rae, The Spinners, Richard Stilgus, the Argentinian Dance Company, Malambo Latras and later this year Hinge and Bradley and Mike Harding. Together they have



Jon Nicholls

promoted a number of visiting companies and artists such as Blossom Dearie, Cleo Laine, the Old Vic Company's *Hamlet*, George and Michael, Keith Jarrett, Pam Ayres and *Pegasus*.

Promcon began officially in February and their first presentation was a one-man comedy show with world famous cricket personality Ferdy Trueman. They will be following this with national tours of Welsh comedian Max Boyce and Jasper Carrott, as well as presenting musical concerts and stage productions.

AYPAA TO ADELAIDE... The Australian Youth Performing Arts Association, a national information and resource centre for youth performing arts, is moving its headquarters from the Seymour Centre, Sydney, to SA to establish an expanded national base in Adelaide.

AYPAA will be based at the Carelaw Arts Centre and Executive Officer Geoffrey Brown is looking forward to the benefits of this expansion. "In South Australia there is a very supportive atmosphere for the development of youth

performing arts and the extra resources and support available will enable AYPAA to more effectively serve and stimulate this kind of activity throughout the country.

"Performing Arts activities for young people have often been neglected in Australia, but there is now a growing interest and enthusiasm which will continue to expand. We are looking forward to developing AYPAA as a backbone of support, information and resources for these activities."

PLAYSCRIPTS AT THE OPERA HOUSE... The Friends of the Australian Opera have just opened a shop in the booking foyer of the Opera House, not just for opera goers but for all theatre patrons. It carries a wide range of books on music, opera, drama, dance and other performing arts, along with postcards,

posters and the convenient 1980 Opera Diary.

All published playtexts of plays in the Sydney Theatre Company's current seasons are on sale, together with recordings of the AOP's 1980 repertoire on record and cassette. The shop is open till 9.30pm on all performance nights, and for Saturday matinees.



Dora Moore

SALAMANCA SCRIPT RESOURCE CENTRE...

With terms like "co-ordination" and "rationalisation of resources" posing strongly for space alongside "excellence" and "innovation" in the arts these days, the establishment of a national script resource centre in Australia this year is something of a happy venture from any perspective.

Funded by the Literature and Theatre Boards of the Australian Council, the Centre, entitled the Salamanca Script Resource Centre, has just begun to operate out of 79 Salamanca Place, Hobart, home of Salamanca Theatre Company, and will seek out, store and catalogue unpublished scripts, primarily suitable for performing or by young people, from Australian authors

Information about scripts received, such as content, area, number of characters, age suitability, length etc, will be compiled bi-monthly and made available to interested companies, organisations and individuals for a \$20 annual subscription fee.

The Centre will act as a vital link between script writers and users in the area of youth performing arts - where the complaint has always been that not enough scripts exist, despite the suspicion that they probably could with a little encouragement to authors.

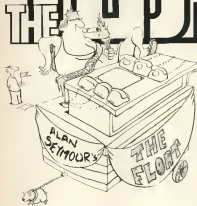
To date seven scripts have been received and all forthcoming will be welcomed. Playwrights with scripts to offer and anyone seeking further information should contact Dora Moore at the above address or phone (002) 234 259.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY

WORLD PREMIERE

ALAN SEYMOUR

FLOAT



Directed by Kevin Palmer
Designed by Vicki Feitecher
Lighting designed by
Nigel Levings

with

Daphne Grey, Robert Grubb,
Edwin Hodgeman, James Laurie,
Audine Leith, Betty Lucas,
Susan Lyons and Kevin Miles.

THE PLAYHOUSE

Adelaide Festival Centre

JUNE 13-28

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



by Norman Kossell

No wonder entrepreneurs think twice these days about investing in large scale miscellanea. Some theatre accounts, I'm told, estimate the Australian production of *Evie* must run numerous months at 83 per cent cost capacity before the more than \$1,000,000 production costs are recovered.

There are, of course, many ways of losing money in the theatre, some unpredictable and beyond control, such as Robert Morley's unfortunate mishap. Cancellation of *The Old Country*, I hear, meant a loss to the Elizabethan Theatre Trust, William Morley and their associates of something like \$100,000. After Brisbane had made up the losses in Melbourne, the show had been reasonably certain to break even in Sydney.

However, money, as they say, is only money. The real loss is that such a fine actor and well-liked man as Morley will almost certainly never appear on stage again. He had been set to play this month in *William Douglas Home's* new comedy, *After The Red & Over*, at the Theatre Royal in Norwich, but has been forbidden to do anything at all before the end of the year.

Ron Haddick on his return from the successful London seasons of David Williamson's *The Club* told how astonished he and his colleagues were at the lack of vitality and almost total absence of ensemble playing in London theatre today. Shows had one, two or perhaps three "names", with the rest of the cast mediocre or worse.

Haddick said that for the small Hampstead theatre in which they opened, the Australians had to contract their performances to the point where Barry Lovett said he felt he was doing nothing to earn his money. The cast was told not to be perturbed by lack of reaction from preview audi-

ences, which were conditioned to an unresponsive appraisal of play and performance. They were surprised, therefore, in the first few minutes to hear a utter, then a shout of laughter, then a roar that persisted throughout. "Well, if that's non-reactive, what does a real audience going to do?" they asked.

Haddick reasoned the audience had become so accustomed to the apathetic fare now generally on offer that when Barry Lovett made his first explosive entrance it was shocked into realisation that here, for once, something was really happening.

The cast was never quite sure why *The Club* was moved into the remarkable location and stage of the Old Vic instead of the West End's Ambassadors, which was also nibbling. But when, after the Old Vic season, the Ambassadors came up with a firm offer, the actors declined, saying they could get plenty of work at home at much better money.

Eleanor Witcomb, Australia's most successful woman playwright, is as busy as ever. Among the items cluttering her drawing board at the moment are a new dramatisation of Lindsay's *The Magic Pudding*, a new children's play for the Nimrod's 1981 Christmas season (she expects them to repeat her *Proctor at the Barn* this year) and a one-woman show for Patricia Kennedy with the 1982 Adelaide Festival in mind. Meanwhile, Eleanor has accepted an invitation to Los Angeles where, among other attractions, there's a lucrative film script offer she is trying to persuade herself she can afford to refuse!

Australian-born London producer Helen Montagu, here again last month on family business, told me she is planning to begin production in America where, despite managerial up-sets and union featherbedding, working conditions for the entrepreneur are more attractive than those in London.

The centenary issue of Britain's theatrical trade newspaper, *The Stage* preceded America's *Playbill* by twenty five years. It's full of nostalgia and wonderful early-days photographs. I enjoyed especially an ad by the lighting firm, Cosby Controls, founded in 1872 by Sir Cornelius Cosby who, it states, "started his career as a candle snuffer at Drury

Lane." Formed to maintain oil and gas lamps in theatres, the company was a pioneer experimenter with an incandescent lamp and in 1881 made London's Savoy the world's first theatre lit entirely by electricity. In 1882, the firm was consultant on the building of Eddystone Lighthouse and in 1887 Cosby was knighted by Queen Victoria for his services to lighting.

That prolific playwright Alan Ayckbourn is determined to be different. His newest comedy, *Sister's Feelings*, is written to be staged in four ways. Start and finish are fixed, but the two middle scenes are changeable. Moreover, the actors decide whether to play on any given night by the test of a coin!

It's happened before and it will again. When Ringling Bros Circus opened its 1980 season at Madison Square Garden, the high wire act could not appear because of lighting difficulties, but one New York daily report went ahead and reviewed the act as if it had played. *As Parents* commented: "Perhaps he was clairvoyant — or just wanted to have glory".

The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust now has the rights to Eduardo de Filippo's *Figliuola*, which Peter Williams originally had hoped to stage here. Approaches have been made to Gina Lollobrigida to star Helen Montagu, who staged the play in London, thinks there's a good chance Gina will accept. At fifty three, she adds, Gina still looks twenty three. The Trust also has the rights to *Stage Sorrow* and approached Michael York to play the Alan Bates role. Other possible Trust attractions are *Andalus*, Peter Shaffer's play about Mozart, and a tour by Ray Donine as *Abel Lincoln*.

As I speculated here last month, however, the Trust did drop plans to tour Alex Buzz's *Big River*. Instead, it is likely to back a return season at the Theatre Royal of Bob Herbert's *No Namer*. No *Paradise*! It will also remove Peter Williams' production of *The Gun Game* with Leonard Teale in the Ron Haddick part, for a tour of North Queensland and Williams' *Crown Marstonia* for the official reopening of Perth's His Majesty's Theatre. The Trust will also handle a Queensland tour by the Sydney Dance Company.

SPOTLIGHT



by Lucy Wagner

Circus Oz is now two and a half years old, and after extensive performing within Australia is about to take off for a four month international tour.

Circus Australia Ltd was incorporated in January 1978 and the company came together from the fusion of two other well-established groups. New Circus from Adelaide specialised in aerial and clowning work, they got together in 1974 and toured in vintage trucks and sidewalls (tent sides without the top). Two years later Soapbox Circus emerged from the Australian Performing Group, an eccentric mixture of rock'n'roll, jug band, acrobatics, juggling and soap-punked satire, they set up as a roadshow and played a wide variety of venues in every State.

When, in 1977, New Ensemble Circus arrived in Melbourne and created *Waste There's A Circus In My Soup* for the Last Laugh — Australia's first hard-top circus event, which ran for five months — and Soapbox returned home after touring, discussions began about amalgamating the two groups and resulted in the new company.

Oz claims to be the first truly Australian circus, and indeed its whole style is marked by that peculiarly Australian mixture of serious, skilled performance presented as a send-up of itself.

They are "committed to creating a circus responsive to contemporary trends in popular entertainment" and their success is due in no small part to



Jack Daniel plays balancing. Photo: Finch Media.

the theatrical form of their show. Like the immensely popular *High Fives Show*, also APG sponsored, the form of *Circus Or* is that of a company of actors performing a circus. A troupe of fourteen make up the band, crew and (in their latest season at the Pans Theatre, Sydney) fourteen acts, all with deliberately named performers. They allow an audience to experience the excitement and wonder of traditional circus while at the same time standing up aspects like the trad-



Jon Howden and his peers hold together
Photo: Pam & Ben

commentary, showbiz names and personae and ludicrous animal acts.

Far preferable to poodles in skirts jumping through hoops is "Kangaroos", where four human big reds and a hideous Queensland cane toad are made to perform bizarre animal acts "live on stage" by Alfonso and Joanne Spagone. And rather than a spangled lovely, it is a bad-tempered Dalak who holds the crockery, dishwasher style, for the plate balancing act.

The main area in which the company has brought the circus form up to date is the music. Andrew Bell, Celeste Howden, Geoff Toll and other members of the troupe replace the big band circus sound with especially composed rock music. This is creatively integrated particularly with, for instance, the juggling acts and "Roof Walk" where Geoff Toll leaves his earthbound kit to permebrate up the wall and along the ceiling where he plays one or two drum beats hanging upside down.

Although *Circus Or* is very much an ensemble, two performers stand out as in some way dominant. Jon Howden is



Stephen Chapman, Jon Howden, Robert Brown and Jack Chandler "Group Juggle"
Photo: Pam & Ben

literally at the centre of things as the circus strong man. He also juggles, sings and does the company accounts, and Sue Broadway who, with remarkable versatility, appears in almost every act from trapeze and rope acrobatics, to a delightful whistle-speaking clown, to juggling, balancing, playing a roneo and also the horns and cello.

But it is contrary to the ensemble set-up of *Circus Or* to allow any kind of hierarchy to develop, so no one member acts as director with an overall vision for the production. Though the theatrical concept is a bonus for the circus it is also in itself, the weakest area of performance.

Their circus skills are impeccable and original but though most of them have had acting experience they go nowhere near fulfilling the theatrical potential of the situation, as did *The High Fives Show*. Personnel need developing, clowns and performers, the back-up stage comedy could be worked up to greater effect, audiences involved more and the whole show could be given both more structure and variation — without losing its gutsy quality — that it takes a directional eye to short.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *Circus Or* has proved itself through enormous popularity with audiences. After the outstandingly successful season at the Last Laugh thirty-two weeks in all! the Sydney Pans



Stephen Chapman and Jon Howden are juggling
Photo: Pam & Ben

season has been slow to build, but its steady improvement has led the producers to take up the option of an extended six weeks there, which ends in mid June.

It is then that the company will test reaction out of the country, first at the South Pacific Festival in Port Moresby from June 21, and after in Luxembourg, Amsterdam, Bonn, Brussels, Paris, the Round House, London and finishing up in October at the Edinburgh Festival.

If all goes well and they aren't wrapped up for further overseas tours, we should see *Circus Or* back for a return season at the Pans in November.

Colin George Departs

his time in Adelaide reviewed by
RON BLAIR

"Not another Poet" they groaned — those who didn't know him, those who had never met him. That was when Colin George was appointed the Artistic Director of the South Australian Theatre Company in 1977. Contrary to general belief, he was not "brought out" to fill the post. He was already here as the Head of Drama at the University of New England. I had worked with him there when he commissioned a play from me and had enjoyed the experience enormously. He's an unusual man with energy to match his ambition and a passion for work tempered by warmth and humour.

Now, after three years with the Company in Adelaide, he is returning to the UK, leaving a fine and vigorous company in the hands of his successors Kevin Palmer and Nick Knight, both, you will be relieved to learn, native sons.

Artistic Directors can be excellent stage directors or good planners who flourish in both conferences and board rooms: they are rarely both. Colin George is both. There is not another director in the country who has his meticulous visual precision and gift for moving actors on a stage. It's not surprising that his best work is done with the classics. The highlights of his time in Adelaide would include his productions of *Macbeth*, *Peter Gent*, *Oedipus*, *Hamlet* and the five-hour *Walden* *Misery* plays.

Neither does he hide in the rehearsal room. After a full day with the actors, he can meet an agent as if he had just finished breakfast. Red tape and budget limitations are all turned to advantage. He delights in arduous circumlocution.

He directed three of my plays so you might say I am biased and you would be right. What criticism then

have I to make of his directorate? Only one. I felt he plunged from one production to the next too hard and too fast. In three years he did twenty-one productions!

"I work at my best capacity under pressure," he told me when I asked him about this. "There's no doubt when I started in Adelaide I was determined to take the reins very firmly myself because I wanted to form a company where we could forge a style between us, an approach to plays. In this way I very deliberately took on most of the directorial work the first year. I enjoy



setting the pace and being an Artistic Director encourages it."

He himself feels that an Artistic Director should stay with a company between three and five years. I asked him why he was going. "I feel it's time for me to move. I have a particular spur in that my family is in London: that's where I want to live and where I want them to grow up. Naturally, I hope to come back to Australia sometime to do a production but I'm happy to make London my home. I'm well aware of the rubbish that goes on there in the same old theatre but it requires one of the few actors in the English speaking

world where there is still a small but healthy choice of establishment theatre which is questioning, challenging and experimenting."

What did he think were the company's weaknesses at the moment? "If the company's strength is its vitality and youth, then the converse is that we haven't got a large number of mature actors such as you would find at the RSC or the National in London. This is a surface disadvantage only. Good theatre doesn't depend on slavish naturalism: we don't have to have old men played by elderly actors. Theatre is often at its best, as in Shakespeare, where the language and the imagination of the actor and audience are the deciding factors and not just the eye, as say, in TV where there is a lot of type casting. Nevertheless, I am sure that in twenty years, when this generation of young actors is middle-aged, a company such as ours will be stronger."

What difficulties were facing the Australian theatre? "I think the distance separating the companies and the performers in each city is something that has to be worked at. Keeping in touch with one another's work is the only way to avoid the parochialism which is death to any artistic endeavour. Television offers immediate rewards to young actors and actresses but more importantly, they need theatre experience if they are to develop. It's important then that there are enough theatres in Australia given the few cities which support them."

What had he got out of working in Australia? "I have no doubt that I've been most daring here in my own work than I ever would have been in England. Here one is aware that both the public and one's colleagues — the actors and the technicians — were only too happy to try something new. I felt that whatever challenge I offered the company, it would rise to it without the sort of heated debate one might have encountered in some places in England. I shall remember the good weather, the pleasure with which one has introduced plays like *Peter Gent* or indeed *Hamlet* to audiences which haven't seen the play before and I've also learnt much about Australia from working on Australian plays. And I value the friendships I've made here: people's energy, their sense of humour and their commitment."

Tasmanian Puppets R.I.P.

by Cathryn Robinson

The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre, which closed its doors and ceased productions this March, preparatory to sailing out of existence altogether, leaves behind the memories and physical remnants of more than sixty productions, a sense of untapped potential in a medium yet to be fully realised, and an enormous vacuum in the genre of puppet theatre in Australia.

Ten years ago, two gifted Tasmanian puppeteers, Peter Wilson and Peter Oldham, returned from England to float the idea of starting a small puppet theatre in their home state. They received lots of moral support and some financial backing through the efforts of teachers, friends and parents — enough moral support for Peter Wilson to continue when Oldham left Tasmania for the mainland and enough financial support to mount a first production in 1971 involving four puppeteers. This was *Harriet And Gustaf* — a traditional tale presented puppet style.

Aware of the need to also develop indigenous drama Peter devised *The Tales Of The Bushland*, four tales based loosely on Aboriginal myth for the major 1972 production — using Australian and local source material was to become another characteristic of the company's work.

Tales Of The Bushland ushered in another characteristic of the embryonic company that was to dominate its artistic development — a willingness to experiment and explore new techniques of presentation in puppet theatre. In this production, enormous string puppets operated by manipulators on stage dressed in black were taken out of the "puppet box". It was a dramatic departure from the previous year's traditional puppet line, more fully realised in the use of huge and puppets in the later *The North Wind And The Sun*, and developments in such productions as *Once A Jolly Swagman*, *Click Go The Shoes*, *The*

Golden Nigger Show, *Rub A Dub Dub* and *Kodj Kodj*.

his determination to explore innovations was perhaps *Moonie's Little Horror Show*, directed by Nigel Triffitt, which packed out in Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne and proved that puppet theatre could offer exciting adult theatre.

In the meantime the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre toured infant and primary schools throughout the state annually, established children's workshops, adult education programmes



Rub A Dub Dub 1978

and in-service teacher's courses in puppetry, began to tour Victoria and South Australia each year as part of the Australia Council's policy of three regional puppet theatres developing to service the country, and continued to co-ordinate the talents of local composers, writers, designers and directors. Overseas directors, such as John Rasedad from England and Takashi Hoshino from Japan, were also brought in for production.

What developed in Tasmania then was a truly indigenous community theatre that reached out to the public on a multiplicity of levels yet nevertheless managed to acquire the respect and attention of overseas artists. In 1978 the company toured Indonesia, followed by Japan in 1979. Also, in 1979, it provided the focal point for the highly popular international puppet festival in Hobart. If this is not success for a small company from a small state, what is?

What went wrong?

Well, in 1976, after shuffling from one temporary premise to another for

six years the company found a permanent home. Even though the State Government did not respond to their appeal for assistance in purchasing the building, the company's board decided to buy 81 Salamanca Place, a three-storey Georgian warehouse, situated next to the community arts complex, and the Salamanca Theatre Company. The building afforded adequate space for a workshop, rehearsal, offices, a gallery and small theatre.

However, promised funds from the then Division of Recreation did not eventuate and although the State Government eventually provided a guarantee and a loan, annual mortgage repayments of \$20,000 now had to be met — from a theatre whose income derived largely from performances to children.

Thus, from 1977 until 1980, the Tasmanian Puppet Theatre began to suffer from the financial burden. It was never adequately resolved, it crippled the board, it ate into company morale: it beleaguered artistic policy. With no real injection of funds from private industry or the State Government in Tasmania, to match the Commonwealth Government's consistent support, the puppet theatre was fighting a losing battle in trying to maintain a small company with some artistic integrity whilst facing a new decade of sprawling costs and financial austerity. It was a losing battle on the level of budgets only. The Tasmanian Puppet Theatre did not fade out or lose its vitality or strong presence in the market place. There was merely an enormous discrepancy between the praise the State Government gave it and the funds they gave it.

I don't believe Tasmania is fully aware of what a unique state theatre has been allowed to die. Nationally, the field of puppetry has also suffered — the rare physical resources of a workshop based for puppet productions over ten years are to be disparaged, a tradition of vigorous experimentation is lost, a company that introduced artists in other fields to puppetry and joined their talents to the medium is gone, and excellent training ground for young puppeteers also gone, and gone the only yardstick for the one puppet theatre company left in Australia, the Marionette Theatre, based in Sydney.

By Jill Sykes

The Sydney Dance Company is about youth and daring and ignoring the obvious



Gavinne Murphy, in his fourth year as artistic director and chief choreographer, follows his instincts and flair for

creativity. Impossible is a word that rarely finds its way into his vocabulary. Janet Vernon, his assistant and creative partner, does the demanding follow-up work that ensures Murphy's ideas are

brought to a full flowering in performance.

The dancers work in an extraordinary milieu of trust and delicate courage and rebellion, celebrating

challenge and deadening exhaustion Murphy constantly asks them for more, stretching their performing abilities until they think they can go no further. Until next time of course.

Murphy's dancers have to be strong individuals and ambitious for themselves. He quotes Miss Jean Brodie's marvellous line about Anna Pavlova, "If she had believed in team spirit, she would have stayed in the corps de ballet." At the same time, as a small company, they need a spirit of comradeship and the ability to work closely as an ensemble. "To be harnessed through their individuality into something rare," as Murphy puts it. As a regular observer, I can repeat the company gives every impression of answering all these qualifications.

"We are working at a rate of physical pressure that we have never equalled. The ballets I am doing this year are much more demanding," he says of the works being shown in the Sydney Dance Company's season at the Opera House Drama Theatre in May, June and July. The three programmes have an eclecticism of new works as well as the return of the full-length *Raisons*, Murphy's dance portrait of Sydney which was first seen in April 1979.

"The first programme is a romantic one, with two new ballets that have been done at a time when so many awful things are happening in the world that there seems a great need for romance." He describes *Prodan* created for a new musical work of the same name by the Australian composer Richard Meale, as romantic and lush — but a hard-hitting contemporary dance work at the same time. "John Raymond has done this extraordinary lighting that makes it seem as though the dancers are performing in a black hole. It's terribly hard for them, poor darlings, but it looks fabulous."

The other new work in this all-Murphy programme is *Daphnis and Chloe* choreographed to Ravel's symphonic poem. "A 55-minute dance epic that will be the death of us all," says Murphy dramatically. "There is something magical about working to a story of such divine innocence as

Daphnis and Chloe. To expect people today to believe that young love could develop so slowly and painfully... It is a ballet about maturity."

Daphnis and Chloe stars a young dancer who has grown with the company, Victoria Taylor, and an experienced performer who joined the company only this year after seven years with the Stuttgart Ballet, Carl Morrow.

The annual *Siberiade*, already a favourite with Sydney audiences, completes the first programme.

Murphy is having an interesting time bringing *Raisons* together again. He thinks he has strengthened the first section with minor choreographic changes and increasing the number of dancers at some points. The second and third sections — nude bathing at Lady Bay, and the old people — are shaping up slightly differently with new people in some of the roles for which Murphy always left certain amount of freedom for the individual interpretation.

Three contrasting works by other choreographers make up the third programme. Barry Moreland has choreographed *Dialogues* to music by Mahler for Janet Vernon and Jennifer Barry. Paul Saliba, who joined the company after several years overseas, has used music by Honegger for his *Journeys*. Joseph Scroggie, of the Australian Dance Theatre, has choreographed a big company work to Debussy.

"One can sense the influence of Joe's development through Ballet Rambert, and it is interesting to see this coming out on the company. He uses two pieces of music, one of which is repeated with such completely different choreography that you would hardly relate it to the first hearing."

The content of these programmes says a lot about the company itself. Overwhelmingly, its creativity comes to the fore. Five major new works in a season of seven ballets is a gargantuan task to take on as a company of only eighteen dancers — a figure that

includes Murphy, Janet Vernon and the ballet master, Robert Ohp.

The strength of its artistic director's creativity must be measured by the fact that four of the ballets are his — the first in the season, I note! But also, that he has invited outstanding young dance creators to contribute their individual ideas to the company, and is excited by what they can bring to his dancers. The company's technical scope is illustrated by their tackling a performing range from pure dance to the dance drama of the third section of *Raisons*, much of which could be described as mime. Equally, there is a breadth of vision that extends from the proverbially Australian themes of *Raisons* (with music by Barry Corningham and design by Alan Oldfield, both Australians), to the mythical Greek source of *Daphnis and Chloe*.

It's no wonder that so many people find the Sydney Dance Company the most exciting and original contemporary dance group in Australia.

With any luck, people overseas will soon have the chance to add their opinions. Negotiations are going ahead for the company's season in New York later this year, a tour that would also take them to Italy and several other European countries. In 1981, they are looking at a season in London followed by appearances at festivals in Paris and West Berlin. They also have existing plans for some unusual events in Australia.

The company has grown to a point where it can be confident of having a varied and individual repertoire to offer — and to where it would benefit from the impetus of travelling beyond Australia and getting outside opinions by playing to totally unknown audiences.

I have no doubt that Murphy's inventive choreography, the freshness of his ideas and the assurance with which the dancers put them across, would delight as broad a range of people abroad as they do here: not only dance aficionados but simply people who like to be entertained and stimulated.

In January 1977, after the JC Williamson's crash, the State Government of Western Australia bought the beautiful Edwardian His Majesty's Theatre — a valuable piece of city real estate — for \$2 million, in response to pleas from all over the state to save it from demolition.

Once saved the question was what to do with the Maj obviously it needed rehabilitating and it seemed at first that only its rococo facade might be preserved as the frontage to a completely new theatre.

Peter Parkinson was appointed project architect in 1977 and spent the first three months thinking about it and making a quick tour of Edwardian theatres of similar vintage in Britain. When he decided to opt for a restoration job inside as well as out he knew it was no easy way out, but as he said "The old girl had something."

The "something" was originally created by Polish architect William Wolk, who built the theatre for Perth businessman TG Molloy at the turn of

ideas for the theatre's interior.

What has perished is housed in the old theatre plus the hotel next door and a new building constructed alongside, which contains all the back-up facilities, dressing rooms for a hundred-odd people, three major sprung-floor rehearsal rooms (of which an upper one could be used as a green room theatre), insulated practice rooms, offices for the two resident companies (the WA Opera Company and the WA Ballet Company) and the air conditioning plant. The old hotel has become the foyer space, of which there was originally none, and also houses a replica of an Edwardian bar. The old central marble staircase, which used to be a bottleneck, has been moved to the right of the entrance and now continues on up to the gallery; there is also a lift that will accommodate wheel chairs.

And what of the changes to the theatre itself? The original stage was at the same level as the new one, but — as was common then — had a one in

pot." The infamous exotic columns have now been coated and other seats have been lost to the perthian pit.

In large part it is the door that maintains the period flavour of His Majesty's, and much care has gone into preserving as much as possible. All the mouldings were made of pressed metal and difficult to do anything with. "The bits that were damaged we just had to paint over and leave, as you can't get a good heater to do anything with them. We have managed to get a great deal of it copied, and we went to the extent of getting mouldings made, so if it fell to pieces we could replace it. You could say we're doing an Edwardian pastiche, but I prefer to look at it as a restoration job."

The theatre's original colour scheme of gold, bronze, turquoise, silver and crimson was decided "too rich for our efforts 1980's tastes", and there was no chance of getting similar materials today, so Parkinson went back to the sort of colours that Edwardian

HIS MAJESTY'S PERTH

T H E P R I C E O F S E N T I M E N T

the century. The doors were first opened on Pelland's visiting Adult Come Opera Company (with top seat prices at 7/60) and has since housed performances by George Murgrove, Nellie Melba, Monmouth, Harry Lauder, Galli Cami, Pavlova, Eric Ffolkes and Clem Dawe, Sybil Thorndike, Vivien Leigh and Margot Fonteyn.

It was first estimated that renovations would cost \$4.6 million, but even at the final reckoning of \$10 million, Parkinson feels it has been somewhat less costly than a new building would have been. It is some ways a compromise, being now a partly modern, partly Edwardian theatre, but it has kept its Edwardian feel and it is one of the few of its kind left. "There is a price you pay for sentiment, but if you give up sentiment you die", said Parkinson.

On March 1, 1978 he and his team moved in, armed with only a few early photos, some historical notes and press clippings, a plan for a back-up building to go in the rear of the south west wing, and some pencil sketches of

twenty five slops. Below it was a cavern that would have been an excellent fire-trap and some poky little dressing rooms. Peter Parkinson and his team have levelled the stage (now twenty one metres square) and divided the below-stage cavern in two, so the stage-chamber is four metres high from the basement, with space above to accommodate an orchestra of seventy.

There has been some complaint about the number the renovated auditorium can seat; where the old Maj could hold some 1,600, it now only takes 1,267 — a source of annoyance to entrepreneurs needing larger box office returns. "They may have squeezed more in before," says Parkinson, "but about five hundred of those couldn't see and we're very sensitive about restricted seating. If all the people who told me they'd sat behind pillars in the Maj had, it would seem that almost every seat was restricted. The site was worked out by the Steering Committee and theatre consultant Tom Brown, we could have had 1,400, but it would have been like trying to squeeze two quantities in a

theatre had in England; relatively light creams, browns and pinks. There have been crises of red plush and gilt, which is fine, but this theatre is about ten years too late for that." It now stands as a gingerbread delight in russets, creams and golds, with the curtain in heavy brocade velvet and surrounded by a replacement of the long lost mural of Day and Night, repainted by two Perth artists.

That curtain went up for the first time on May 26 on the opening concert presented by individual performers and artists from a number of West Australian companies. Following that the WA Opera and Ballet Companies have moved into residence there, and as well as their seasons the theatre will be available to other companies and producers.

Summing up just over three years of work, Peter Parkinson said "I'd like people to come into the theatre and say 'Well here's the old Maj, spick and span, bright and comfortable, just like it once was. What can they have spent all that money on?' Then I think we can say our job's been well done."

The Maj's renovated exterior, April 1988. Inset/The team: Lonnie Rife, Peter Parkison, Dai Johns, Carolyn Marshall and Wendy Doll in the new Maj



INTERNATIONAL

In favour of the old school

by Irving Wardle

Britain's actor-managers, from as far back as I can remember, have been a standing joke of metropolitan reviewers: egotism, business, holding sub-standard companies, avoiding the pressures on modest salaries, and flourishing "Shakespeare" on the altar of self-interest and "brand" delivery — such was the legend up to the death of Donald Wolfit, the last of the line in 1968.

It was Wolfit's good luck to have engaged a dresser called Ronald Harwood who commemorated him in one of the finest theatrical biographies of the century, a book which also defined the whole "undiscoverable" tradition to which Wolfit belonged, and made the unarguable point that from the early eighteenth-century to the late 1930s, the actor-manager was the English theatre. He played from one end of the country to the other, usually in dire physical conditions, and maintained an unshakeable belief in the theatre "as a cultural and educative force".

Mr Harwood has now renewed his campaign in a piece called *The Dresser* which arrives in the West End from Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre. In spite of its title, this is a salute to the actor-manager, broad as large, rather than a reconstruction of the author's life with the boys.

The time is 1942 and the place some god-forsaken Midlands touring date. Sir has collapsed in the street leaving his dresser, Norman, and the rest of the stage crew wringing their hands in the midst of an air raid awaiting the first cancellation in the company's history. Of course, the pallid old monster lumbers in just in time to be coaxed into his *Levi* costume and stride on, leaving the bottles to give the final performance of his career.

Among other things, *The Dresser* is just the kind of melodramatic suspense story in which the old actors excelled. It also accommodates quantities of backstage lore: superstitions, actors' jokes ("What'll my followers with the clap?") and the routine tensions of getting a show on. It is here that Norman earns his role too — it



Patrick Magee (*Mythophages*) and Simon Carter (*Melodrama Fantasy Dances*, *Dr Faustus*, *Plains*, *Christopher Marlowe*)

being his job to mount the nearly demoralised bulk of the makeup crew into a scrum of longings, take him through his long-term opening lines, and protect him from the disconcerted wild, wide stage manager and seductive ingenue who beseege the No 1 dressing room door.

The role offers a superb springboard for the ugly-ducking sensibility of Tom Courtenay, standing old-manishly on guard over his chest, sopping, coping, fighting off intruders, and keeping himself going with a half bottle of Scotch in the back pocket of his baggy wartime trousers.

It is also through Courtenay's performance that the play's last penny drops. Not only does the dresser suggest a fool, he is the fool, one of the multiple witnesses with which the events of Sir's farewell engagement mirror those of *King Lear*. The air raid parallels the storm. Lear's depleted estate is reflected in wartime rationing ("I'm reduced to old men, cripples, and needy boys"), and Sir goes through the night trying to discover who he loves him best as a prelude to making an autobiographical partition of his kingdom.

In Manchester, Michael Elliott's production was split between the house-dressing room and a sea-fogged wing area (cloud with lamps, and thunderbolts) leading to an open site of the *King Lear* performance in the arena's outer perimeter. Courtenay is partnered by Freddie Jones, a specialist in old-fashioned man-of-war, who compasses the pace, enthusiasm, sleeping authority, and bursts of charm and loquacity without ever succumbing to the character's own

charisma. A splendid piece of work.

It is further argument in favour of the old school were needed: the National Theatre supplies it in Peter Hall's production of *Children*, played immaculately uncut and with no trace of a ruling idea aside from giving maximum prominence to Paul Scofield's Mont, whose yodeling line-delivery and detachment from direct emotion leave you guessing for the modest nature of Wolfit and the rest of the old harvesting gang.

However, 1964 actor-managerial discussion has been magnificently upheld in a low-budget studio production of *Marlowe's Dr Faustus* which has downed a West End berth. The work of Christopher Porter, who is an all-round, highly dedicated non-representative screen which amongst strengths in making the page by presenting Harris (James Aubrey) as a Watlington Wrenner, Lord who is just the man to fall for all the archaic amusements, is that it puts the play's sublime opening and closing scenes, "In presence" and the show's Saturnian epilogue, "O that our mistakes be glorious".

Patrick Magee's *Mythophages* is a given, madly tormented devil who squats his prey around like an indulgent tiger, while also making it clear that he is getting this used on the cheap, further under-scores the line of the production, which delivers its masterstroke with the appearance of Helen of Troy as a boy. At Simon Carter's entrance, like Pygmalion's statue come to life, the cast should their darlings ever. You can believe it.

Late of Tennessee

by Karl Lavitt

In a recent New York Times article Tennessee Williams made the statement: "I've gone through a period of eclipse in recent years, and maybe I am too old to write anymore, but you have to go on with a because 'well, it's your life'."

You cannot help but admire the persistence of the man for a playwright and a poet he is remarkably dogged. This season in New York we have had the opportunity to witness two new works, one on Broadway (*Sticks*) for *A Summer Hotel*, and one for an Off-Off Broadway

ATIONAL



Phyllis Diller (left) and Morris Benesh (right) in *Katchi, Katchen and Kander*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein

group, *Katchi, Katchen and Kander*.

The Off-Off Broadway company, The Jean Cocteau Repertory has featured two Tennessee Williams' plays in their current season, *In The Bar Of A Tokyo Hotel* and *Katchi, Katchen and Kander*. *Katchi, Katchen and Kander* has that suspicious title of "a work-in-progress" as well as carrying the subtitle "An outrage for the stage." All this cross-baggage means is that Mr Williams is attempting to write an absurdist play. The only previous effort in this genre that I can recall was the 1960's *Sigvard Pagan*, when Zoe Caldwell was wonderfully funny as a Southern group columnist.

Katchi is set in Manhattan's Soho where we meet poor typical American family. Father's a retired male teacher, Mother works a waitress and the two children, having failed in school are sent upon to seek their fortune (initially on the streets of New York. Add to this a lecherous Lutheran minister and an old friend in grotesque drag. Her name is Frankie Blumenschein-Schlegel and that tale is, unfortunately, characteristic of the whole piece.

This is a dumping that is as heavy as lead and is totally indigestible. Two Absurdist moments, lightness and logic, are nowhere to be seen and the whole style seems alien to Mr Williams. Furthermore, the production underlines what is already painfully obvious, making this work-in-progress one that has no place to go.

Clothes For A Summer is another matter. It is an ambitious attempt to examine the mystique of two personalities that, down the years, continue to fascinate Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

The curtain reveals Oliver Smith's evocative setting that immediately registers as some kind of mysticism to Hell. There is a facade of an asylum that abruptly ends in a jagged line to show us low, dark halls beyond. A blazing flamethrower symbolically glows, the wind howls. Two men in historic wimples and trailing black gowns stand like guardian vultures at the door of the asylum. Scott Fitzgerald (Kenneth Haigh) pines outside awaiting his wife. He is inappropriately dressed for the scene, in the white dunks and open jacket of his Hollywood life. Hence, the play's title. Zelda (Geraldine Page) rushes on in complete darkness, torn pink ballet shoes, dancer's waist-up. (Continued over page)

legging, pink baller shoes.

A promising beginning for what Mr Williams has called "A Ghost Play" (from the windy hill in North Carolina, we dip back consistently to the past to the young Scott and Zelda and their friends, as the Fitzgeralds confront the ghosts of their youth. In presenting these personalities — Zelda's aviator lover Hemingway, the Gerald Murphy, Mrs Patrick Campbell — Mr Williams is immediately placed in a straightjacket of reading a tale thrice told. We see Zelda's bedding the aviator, Hemingway beating Scott sexually, Mrs Patrick Campbell sifting a joke. This necessary to provide literary history in the playtext seems creates a basic flaw in the play that Mr Williams cannot begin to overcome. Perhaps because this play was for Broadway Mr Williams believed that lots of explanations were needed.

A pity. For in the last scenes we catch glimpses of another play that is struggling to emerge from this one. It is a play that is without explanations taking knowledge for granted and moving on to fly free in a poetic form that truly suggests a "ghost play." Williams' handling of time in these later scenes is fascinating, as past, present, future tumble over each other. We see Zelda become a tormented Cassandra as she contemplates for fiery death. Scott takes a private pill for his heart that becomes incorporated into the past. Fire bells of Zelda's future sound in the past and present.

Given Mr Williams' persistence for



Kenneth Haigh and Geraldine Page in *Clothes for a Summer Heat*. Photo: Jack Burtham

presenting, there is something valuable here just waiting to be worked again in a much more adventurous manner.

The play brings together Mr Williams, director Joe Quintero and Geraldine Page who all three worked together in 1952 in *Summer And Smoke* and probably each had ghosts of their own to confront. Ms Page, with her acoustic delivery, is a vibrant if over-aged Zelda, but plays past and presents on the same note. Kenneth

Haigh's gaily and semi-co-sympathetic Scott does better, but this is Zelda's play and Mr Williams would do well to give a more consistent spotlight to his heroine.

Clothes as a theme is a disappointment, an attempt at a major theme that fails. We have to remember Tennessee Williams' recent quote: "Work is the loudest four-letter word there is" and hope that he has the courage to tell the Fitzgeralds' story just one more time.

Future Theatre Happenings Abroad

AUSTRALIAN Centre INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

133 Dowling Street, Potts Point, NSW
Telephone 357 1200
Director: Marki Chernish
Secretary: Glenda Lonsdale

HELP WITH THEATRE SEATS

Through the generosity of the "League of New York Theatres" and "Theatre Development Fund", the US Centre of the ITI at 1860 Broadway, can once again assist visiting international theatre professionals with the purchase of theatre tickets while in New York City. Upon arrival, visitors should telephone ITI US to set up an appointment (212) 245 3930.

11TH WORLD PUPPET FESTIVAL

This will be held by UNIMA, the international puppet organization in Washington, DC from June 10 to 13, 1980. Delegates from 15 member nations will attend and 15 companies will perform. Puppeteers, actors, technicians, librarians, artists, students, educators will attend seminars, evening meetings at Georgetown University, performances at Kennedy Center, and exhibits and shows at the Smithsonian. The event, hosted by the Puppeteers of America, is co-sponsored by the US National Commission for UNESCO UNIMA-USA (Jim Hansen, creator of the Muppetts, president), and Puppeteers of America Inc.

THIRD WORLD THEATRE

The ITI's South Korean centre will hold an international third world theatre festival in Seoul in March 1981.

The ITI's Cyprus centre will hold a third world conference on the theme "Theatre and the defence of freedom" from October 30 to 26, 1980.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF WOMEN ARTISTS

This will be held in Copenhagen,

Denmark, July 14 to 18, 1980, coinciding with the World Conference of the UN Decade for Women. Readings, performances, panel discussions and films will demonstrate the achievements of women in art. Women are invited to participate in the slide presentation, publications display, and international posterand exhibition. For information contact: Helen Lutz Kluge, 61 Hørsholmsgade, 333 3300 Vesterbro, Denmark.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS OF THE PERFORMING ARTS

SIEMAS will hold its 14th International Congress from September 15 to 20 at Belgrade Yugoslavia. The theme is "The Use of Theatrical and other Records for Artistic and Technical Purposes, Methodology." Workshops will cover 1. Museums of the Performing Arts and Theatres, 2. Documentation and Theatre Criticism, 3. Lexicography of the Performing Arts. Contact the Secretary: Sima Jovic, Mosty Pocerke, Univerzitet SR SRBIJE, 19 Opatovik, Jostrenova, 11000 Beograd, Yugoslavia.

DANCE



BY WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

groups, so please, let's see the next French's attractions demonstrate a bit of wit and knowledge on the subject.

PRAGUE CHAMBER BALLET

The Prague Chamber Ballet looked sadly lacking in group cohesion, verse and intelligent design in nearly everything it did. They probably thought it terribly daring to do some of the things they did back in Prague but those affected dramatic poses and evoked mythemes just not trying to communicate anything very early on in the piece and stayed that way through everything they performed. Perhaps it was some sort of mischievous joke of the Festival Trust's, in that they would put this company side by side with the Australian Dance Theatre so that our audiences would witness the home company's unimpaired superiority and not be so parochial in future. Whatever the reason, the Prague Chamber Ballet was a major embarrassment to the Sydney Opera House Trust and the dance critics of all persuasions.

BERLIN BALLET

The Ballet of the Berlin Komische Oper on the other hand would have impressed in

that it allowed us to look at a complete ensemble company and to listen to the complete music to Swan Lake as its composer wrote it, but neither of those gifts, as it turned out, were sufficient to justify bringing it to this country. As a ballet company the Berlin Ballet is not of major importance and the choreographic output of Swan Lake at best was rarely above that of the commonplace.

The main reason why the *Uti-Swan Lake* of 1877 was a ballet was that the choreography of Reisinger was dismal. The so-called change that the music was "too symphonic" was merely a pretext trumped up by the dangers and Reisinger because it gave the few changes for the principals to have an extended sequence to themselves, as far as Tchaikovsky was concerned the drama was a limping act and the cause of the promiscuous.

It was due to all the amendments and changes brought about by the musical director of the 1925 revival, Boris de Bono, that the score is such a wild mess of Tchaikovsky on the baton day back, not so much the wonderful and inspired choreography of Marius Petipa and Lew Ivanov. If only we could have had a proper day

Berlin and Prague Ballets and Raymonda

On the strength of the dance companies from overseas brought to Australia for this year's Adelaide Arts Festival I can only hope that Jan Sherman (if allowed to run his course as director) will give consideration to the suggestions of people in the dance scene in Australia as to what to bring out next time in the way of dance groups.

The Ballet of the Berlin Komische Oper and the Prague Chamber Ballet were a couple of the most flawed, inept and dull companies ever seen in this country. Neither of these imported groups could honestly pass muster in the way of originality of vision or uniqueness of content.

On the face of it, one can agree that musically speaking both of the imported ballet companies (along with the Mabou Mines group from New York) were of considerable interest. Prague Chamber Ballet had scores by Debussy and various "avant-garde" Czechoslovakian composers. The Berlin Ballet had the show of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* in its complete and original form as well as music by Debussy, Schubert and Stravinsky.

It is a shame for the Adelaide Festival that neither company had any real impact in terms of dance values.

Undoubtedly it was an expensive mistake bringing out the Berlin Ballet to Australia but in my opinion it was money wasted (apart from anything else the seasons in each capital city have hardly been well run). For the same amount of money we could have had at least two top notch groups from Australia. Paul Taylor's Company say or Twyla Tharp and dancers. America is the place for innovating and exciting dance now in the world, it no longer lies with those expatriated third-class from Czarist



The Berlin Ballet in Debussy's *Le Har*

choreographer with as much respect and genius as this two to meet the original work as it was envisaged. Tom Schilling is far from approaching such ability.

Both in his *Swan Lake* and in the 1961 programme works, one was always conscious of a veritable encyclopedia of bits and pieces from modern classical choreographers. We have liturgical movements in the Act 2 *Lake* scene, echoes of Gingsorovich men in the court scenes, goosestepping their way along as if they had wandered out of the Bolshoi Sparrowcar and a weird concoction of Jiri Kylian, Balanchine, Cranko and God knows who else in the "ethnic" dances and so forth of Act 3.

But even this would have been inadequate if the whole work had been tied together dramatically with the music and the idea behind Tchaikovsky's original, but Schilling, in collaboration with his General Manager Bernd Kellinger, has managed to construct a thematic and schematic directorial concept on the whole ballet that tells of any natural life, diversity or magic.

While the music may be a "revolution", the storyline itself is supplemented in sharping home its ideas about political systems, corruption in high places and the dilemma of the individual of conscience in a vile system. Time after time it thus pointshammered home as the exposure of any growing, cultivated drama or characterisation or poetry, contrast of choreographic growth.

HAMLET TERRITORY

With a Siegfried glimpsed at the very opening of the ballet, lying prostrate on the ground, and looking very tickled after with the pale cast of thought we know we are very deep into Hamlet territory. Fine, poem made, but we still get it when Siegfried dances a series of tangled, confused duets and trios with his mother (the Queen Gertrude) and the court adviser cum sorcerer (Rothbart, Claudius). If these literary digressions weren't enough we get a flash of Ophelia in Act 3 when the duets with the Queen get rather heated, and a snippet of *Ophelia* with our hero wandering around with a white scarf, for no discernible reason.

All of these impressions have to come through the viewer's eye though, since there is precious little in the way of scenery or costume to give one any sense of time, place or social milieu.

The court dances in Acts 1 and 2 are uniformly dull, robotic and unedifying, there is no grace, nervous waltz to the Act 1 music that has not a glimmer of the sheen and glow of the music. The same again happens in Act 3 with the marionette, nearly a place where the stage and choreography should mirror the full Tchaik grandeur of the music, but no.

For all their much vaunted fidelity to Tchaikovsky's original intentions (and let it be remembered, he was a musician and demonstrably did not know much about what worked on the stage, especially the ballet stage), Tom Schilling and his librettists have seen fit to disregard the impulse and demand of the music itself. They have also dispensed with any sense of majesty and poetry in the Act 2 Lake scene (though in this production it could be the surface of the moon for all the "designs" left in).

There is no reason for Siegfried to be there for a start. At least in the "old fashioned" version there was enough dramatic realism for him to be there, he



Michaela Kerkhofs as Bayanida. Photo: Boris L. Gurev

was out hunting, but in this "streaming" version he just happens to appear there like a ghost. And look what doesn't happen when he gets there. No discovery, no passion, no poetry. Dramatically and choreographically speaking the Lake scene is nowhere. The *Brook of Ophelia* scenes are given movements as flat and insipid as those that characterised the court, so there's not even a movement contrast.

It is here that the "old fashioned" version has it all over this modernistic proletarian misfit. As for Ivanov was a mastercraftsman and he knew how to pace and build his big scenes so that they made sense in duets (trios as well as elucidating the dramatic thread). Even more important was his ability to translate the love and exhilaration of the first encounter in choreographic, music, throughout the famous White Swan pas de deux. Although waxes-on-waxes-off and waxes archaic, happen in hundreds of ballets, the images of struggle in bedchambers, occur in

Swan Lake alone. So too, those deep recesses of "longed-for paradise of a meaning beyond their baldrick choreography, pointing rather a wondrousness and illumination at the embodiment of an ideal. It is that, as much as romantic attraction, that brings Siegfried and Odette together.

Swan Lake in its old form created by Petipa and Ivanov is not a "fantasy about birds" as only the deliberately myopic would claim, it is a drama about freedom revealed in movement of dancing variety and clarity. The finale is so exciting because that final escape from bondage is truly cathartic and has been prepared for throughout the duration of the work.

In Schilling's version, there was no reason because there was no cogent presentation of struggle, merely events. When that huge sheet of silk came cascading down at the end of the ballet it meant nothing in relation to what had gone before and therefore means nothing in its own terms.

The Berlin Komische Oper Ballet tried to dance *Swan Lake* not as the lyric tragedy it is but rather as a vast comic poem, all in tones of gray. Let it be an object example to those tempted to "politicise" a masterpiece of the Romantic tradition, especially when they can't portray either the dialectic of politics or the manner of Romanticism on the stage convincingly.

PROGRAMME TWO

Things didn't improve much in the ballets on the Second Programme. *Le Mer, Youth Symphony* and *Evening Dances* were all out of the same circus. Schilling would.

Youth Symphony was a corpse of Petipa and Balanchine and only revealed the busy and lurching Soviet trained technique of the dancers. If one is going to compose a ballet without plot (even if it has a theme like *Youth*) one must make sure that the line and design of these exposed bodies on stage is honest, clear and self explanatory as well as logical in exposition.

But *Youth Symphony* was full of poses, manipulations and twisting answers of choreographic progression. It was only made worse by the manner of film performance. The women seemed edgy and hostile while the men had nothing in the way of balance, elevation or sufficient follow through in their post de tous and all of them clearly need to clean up their footwork and placement so that they can be seen to phrase an enchainement properly rather than fall from one into another.

The same faults were well illustrated in *Evening Dances* although they didn't spread quite so wide here simply because there were really only two main protagonists on the stage, that is after all those

ley Robbersonque gatherings had been diagnosed with.

In (the *pas de deux*) was another patchwork unfortunately but at least one could relate with the two excellent dancers Dieter Hahn and Jutta Deutschland. Hahn a wide, blossoming dolt, the energy always arising from the attraction/repulsion theme, flowing out and upward only to contract back into a tight hold or adhesive lift. It was also much more musically torn than *La Mer*.

Masses and masses of prosthetic, ornate, arching and unbalancing elements reminiscent of Bayard at his worst, don't make up for a representation of Love, they merely show an overworked imagination and underdeveloped invention, no matter how much the audience or the critics may need in their own emotions.

Choreo's needs and nervy *Les de Carver* didn't get a good treatment at the hands of the East Germans either. No sparkle, no colour in check up and so unforgettably sloppy, miserable made me wonder if this was the same work as that I had seen by the Stuttgart Ballet.

Anyway, at least Australia can say it is the only country in the West that has seen the Berlin Ballet, and the Berlin people can say that they have a gauge of how the West sees Dance. If this is what the dancers in East Germany have as a constant diet

however, it's a wonder that more of them didn't defect.

AUSTRALIAN BALLETS RAYMONDA

The important thing to remember about *Raymonda* is not to go on a looking for a story line. It hasn't got one. It also hasn't got very good music (Stravinsky called Glazounov a "Carl Philipp Emanuel Rompky Karsakow" which is hard to apt).

In the Australian Ballet's version, the work is also nibbled by the interference of Nureyev's bits and pieces as well as the hedonist designs of Ralph Kaelin (pray tell me what huge mirrors and Romanoff bi-ophthalmic eagles have to do with medieval Provence!).

When one scrubs all this away, what one does have is some of the finest Russian Mariinsky choreography of Marius Petipa. *Raymonda* is in fact three of the finest crafted "plotless" abstract ballets on the classical stage. The work as a whole and especially the central role is a technician's part. The Australian Ballet is not up to the technical demands of the work, rather is the Opera Theatre stage big enough to contain the work.

Raymonda is a large, grand expansive work. It does not develop from cramped surroundings. The large corps de Ballet moments need room so that the they didn't

have that space on the Opera Theatre stage and therefore looked busy, clumsy and out of character. I don't think that anyone on the artistic side of the Australian Ballet, likes or even has the remotest interest in *Raymonda* as a full length ballet, and I wouldn't blame them because it just isn't a ballet, especially in that ridiculous incarnation, but if it is going to have any life on stage, since one, at least the lead parts, must have some interest.

Michèle Karkulic and Kelvin Coe had a fair command of the technical necessities but no atmospheric aura about them; the second cast of Gary Norman and Lois Squire didn't seem to give a damn and just walked their way through it, the third cast of Sherrin da Costa and Dale Baker staggered their way through with tons of atmosphere, bravado and stage tricks, but no essence of style.

The corps de ballet was wonderful throughout, it just goes to show that when one gets down to the gritty gritty, the Australian Ballet has no awareness or interest in the square or measurements of a pure classical or Romantic style, it gets through these works purely by bluff and stage manner. The Australian audience are seeing not a first rate internationally acclaimed company, but rather a provincial company, that, in places like this, is fun only in being third rate.



Arthur Coe and Michèle Karkulic in the AB's *Raymonda*. Photo: Brian Gault

THE LIEDER SOUTHERN REGIONAL THEATRE

GOLDSMITH STREET, GOULBURN.
Resident Artistic Director: John Spicer.
Phone (0485) 21 5868

July 2nd to 5th & 9th to 12th
THE REMOVALISTS
by DAVID WILLIAMSON

Aug. 4th to 9th & 13th to 16th
Comedy to be announced.

Sept. 17th to 20th & 24th to 27th
THE CRUCIBLE
by ARTHUR MILLER

The Lieder S.R.T. receives support from the Australia
Council Theatre Board.

UNION THEATRE

University of Sydney Union
University of Sydney 2006

Situated in Parramatta Road, (buses stop at theatre entrance) just a few kilometres from the centre of Sydney.

Previously for predominantly student use, the theatre is now available all year round for outside hirers.

Fully functional, for live theatre or film, or as a seminar/lecture theatre.

Modern, stadium type auditorium is fully air-conditioned and seats 524.

Rates compare favourably with other theatres in Sydney.

Hire rates and further particulars are available on request by calling the Theatre Advisor on 860 1355, ext. 279.

Producers, Theatre Companies,
Entrepreneurs...

ALL YOUR PROGRAMME NEEDS SOLVED

Are you looking for a good deal on your programmes?

We can offer you:

- * A high quality publication
- * Efficient service
- * A good percentage
- * We can provide programmes/catalogues/brochures for any event: plays, entertainments, concerts, festivals...

If you're interested contact:
Programme Publishing Pty Ltd
at 200 Crown Street,
Darlinghurst NSW 2010
or ring (049) 67.4470.

NIMROD THEATRE WORKSHOP SUPERVISOR/ HEAD CARPENTER

Nimrod Theatre is looking for a first rate Carpenter/Joiner capable of supervising and leading two other tradesmen and an apprentice to take charge of our scenery construction workshop in Glades from mid-July.

Nimrod's unconventional scenery incorporates working with metal and plastics. The Head Carpenter should be knowledgeable enough and enthusiastic about working in these mediums. Ingenuity and a mechanical mind would certainly be an asset as well.

The workshop services our two Theatres in Surry Hills as well as numerous transfers to other Theatres in Sydney and on tour. The Head Carpenter will oversee the fit ups for these venues. Demands and pressure of work will at times be great but in return we offer well above award wages, generous holidays, and the opportunity to be involved in Australia's leading and most exciting Theatre Company.

If this challenge appeals and rouses a spark of interest write to The Production Manager, Nimrod Theatre P.O. Box 160, Sydney Mail Exchange 2012 NSW giving details of past employment.

OPERA



BY DAVID
COGAN

2 Threepenny Operas and Giovanni on film

Two well-known but problematical works — Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and Britch Wulff's *Threepenny Opera* — dominated my opera-going during the month under review.

In quick succession, I saw two but highly contrasting productions of *The Threepenny Opera* in Brisbane and Canberra, and I had an opportunity to preview Joseph Losey's film version of *Don Giovanni* which opens late this month (June) in Sydney and will be seen later in the year in other capital cities.

Meanwhile, as I mentioned last month, the Australian Opera was touring the provinces — playing *The Magic Flute*, *La Traviata* and *Faust* in Melbourne and Brisbane before reviving *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and its spectacularly successful John Cox production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pastorale* in Melbourne during May.

Travelling water is a sea of reveals, as it were. Before launching its demanding winter season at the Sydney Opera House early in June with a return season of its 1974 *Tales of Hoffmann* featuring Joan Cardon as the fair heroines followed, a mere two days later, by the premiere of a brand new production of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* featuring Leona Mitchell in the title role.

The only other live productions during the period under review were a very good excursion into the 17th-century repertory by the State Opera of South Australia, and a couple of minor Sydney seasons devoted to Gilbert and Sullivan, on the one hand, and a pastiche spanning no less than 300 years, on the other.

Both *The Threepenny Opera* and *Don Giovanni* are problem pieces for anyone who tackles them: the former, because it requires a team of actor-singers which is

all but impossible to assemble, the latter for the fantastic nature of its plot, its incredible vocal demands and the near-impossibility of bringing off its dissonant in purely theatrical terms.

The two recent *Threepenny Operas*, viewed together in retrospect, provide a near-perfect illustration of the problem of the piece. The first, put on by Brisbane's T.M. Company, was by and large dramatically excellent but fell down in the singing vocal department. The second, presented by Canberra Opera, was vocally much better but lacked dramatic punch. It was far from as simple as that, of course, but their generalisation will do for now.

The problem of *The Threepenny Opera*, of course, is complicated by Brecht's neo-classical intention to play it to maximum effect, a team of performers must be possessed, preferably individually as well as collectively, by a gut-discard of human nature not to mention the integrity of Brecht's intentions.

It requires the sort of raw anger and frustration at the status quo that seldom survives adolescence and very rarely indeed flowers anywhere in Occident, even in the ultra-conservative confines of Sydney's Peterborough or the baroque atmosphere of public service-oriented Canberra.

BRISBANE'S THREEPENNY OPERA

The recent Brisbane production had a lot going for it to start with, in terms of a production team highly experienced in exactly the right quarters. One could hardly fault the credentials either of John Milson a thoroughly experienced opera director with a good deal of straight dramatic work to his credit as well, or those of his musical director, George Truett, who some years ago demonstrated his special affinity for the Brecht-Wulff idiom when the Australian Opera presented *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at the Sydney Opera House in 1975.

Occasionally, Milson admittedly permitted the actors to drift too far apace for comfort, but by and large I found the set an admirable one for an opera peopled by as frankly a collection of rogues, neo-hippies and downright nasty types as has ever been assembled in the one stage stream.

It also seemed to make particularly good use of an awkward theatre and plot arrangement by placing some of the action on a walkway between pit and audience. This was my first experience of Brisbane's Twelfth Night Theatre, but even at a glance

it is clear that the venue has considerable problems and thus seemed an admirable way to get round at least some of them.

What was generally lacking among the performers in this *Threepenny Opera* was raw guts, not only in the singing, where just about nobody had enough sheer vocal power to project an off-balance half way up a moderate-sized theatre to which I was going, but also in the delivery of the spoken dialogue. It was all just a shade too polished, whereas it all ought to be rough as guts.

It was just not in keeping with the quite marvellous glimpses of the context into which the action was hurled. Most of the individual performances were quite good, in particular the Mac the Knave of Harry Scott and the Tiger Brown of Duncan Watt.

I was also quite impressed by the snarling Peachum of Michael McCaffrey as well as the Mrs. Peachum of Milson herself, standing in at the last moment for the lady who was scheduled to play the part. As no stage did he camp it up, and he came across very well indeed in one of the work's pivotal roles.

In fact, Milson sang as well as anybody in the cast, with one notable exception and a good deal better than most, for there was an alarming paucity of vocal talent in the cast despite its considerable dramatic strengths.

Indeed Anderson's Polly looked absolutely marvellous, but failed to convince dramatically because it was woefully small of spoken voice and just about inaudible when required to sing.

The one outstanding vocal performance of the night was turned in by Sally McKinnon as Jenny Diver. Best was a lady who could act with conviction, project her lines to me and beyond, and sing robustly yet pleasingly.

AND CANBERRA'S

The Canberra production (mounting as it did from the local opera company, was probably stronger on the vocal front though not as satisfying as it ought to have been due to an unfortunate staging problem arising from James Rutherford's set design.

In itself Rutherford's set was quite stunning visually, consisting as it did of a bare scaffolding centre stage on top of which the orchestra was positioned in full view of the audience. Thus the action ebbed and flowed under and around the arches, with some entrances and exits taking place over the top of the scaffolding,

and the performers occasionally strutting round behind it on full view of the audience.

But of course this means that the conductors, Donald Hallen, was behind and above most of the performers most of the time with the inevitable result there could be no visual communication between him and them. Such positionality would, of course, be disastrous for most operas, but admittedly a much less of a problem with a piece so intrinsically rhythmical as *The Threepenny Opera*.

Even so, there were moments when things got marginally out of kilter and there was nothing Hallen could do except rescue things by following the singers. No disasters resulting, but things were a good deal less precise than it would have been nice for them to be.

Dramatically, there was nothing to complain in John Tucker's direction, but unfortunately there was quite a lot to complain of in the performances he was able to draw out of his principals. Everybody seemed just plain too nice, too coy, to suit the work. The players didn't merely need to intensify their characterisations, as by and large had been the case in live opera; they actually seemed not to grasp the essence of the characters they were playing.

This even applied to Doug Withnail's Muz, early in the piece, though he grew quite palpably as the evening wore on, and was quite pleasantly moving by the third act. The same could almost be said of Elizabeth Lord's Polly, though of course that is far less of a flaw in her role than in Blackheath's.

And she coped quite magnificently with the instantaneous transformation required of her midway through Act II when Blackheath hands the business over to her when he is forced to go into hiding: it was not hard at all to believe that she was now fierce and assertive enough to keep the heads of crooks in their place.

Of the rest, I find myself thinking back over and over again to Mildred Turner's oddly effective Mrs Peachum — then, first, almost the essence of timidity as first glance, but gradually growing as the drama unfolds how tough and unflinching the lady is under the surface. There was no doubt she knew what *The Threepenny Opera* was all about, had everyone else been as good, this would have been a marvellous realisation of a piece very often performed, but only very rarely performed with distinction.

DON GIOVANNI

Some quite extraordinary advance publicity has emanated about Joseph Losey's film version of *Don Giovanni* led me to apprehend a preview screening with a

certain amount of somnolence. Could it really be as good I asked myself, as these reports claimed, or was it just that we were being fed a carefully filtered sampling of the actual reactions of the overseas critics by the Hoyts' publicity machine?

I could not help thinking back to the ecstatic advance publicity about the flagrant film version of *The Magic Flute*, which in the event impressed me only moderately, and to a fairly deep personal determination to accept without reservation that film is really an ideal medium for conducting opera.

Clearly, such an inherently expensive art form as grand opera must make use one way or another of the impersonal media of it to survive, but I have always tended to prefer the frankness and honesty of recorded opera, which starts off by ditching altogether the visual element in favour of concentrating on the ravishing fullness of sound that can be achieved in the modern studio but seldom if ever seen in the actual theatre.

Film and television must obviously be perceived with, but the problems would seem to be almost innumerable unless you proceed and manage, in itself a dangerous proposition, you are inclined to get less than the best sound, there is an ever-present danger of too many close-ups of vibrating tonsils, if a director becomes too insensitive he risks doing severe disservice to the integrity of a work designed to communicate in the inevitably distanced context of the opera theatre, with the pit (if not always the yawning abyss) of an orchestra pit always intruding between tenors and the nearest spectators. With TV, spectacle is all but impossible, at least in live opera production terms, because of the postage stamp dimensions of the medium itself.

But all they say about the Losy *Don Giovanni* proves in the event to be true for the first time, when observing a filmed opera, for no stage-wound or squirmed or felt moved even momentarily to draw away and *Don Giovanni* such a triumph is far more difficult to achieve in production than with most operas for it is filled with potentially deadly static areas and places such emphasis on the supernatural and the humanist that there is always a danger that any performance will end up degenerating into downright absurdity.

But there are very few touches in this film version, and it has a dramatic unity and credibility which is probably impossible to achieve in the live theatre — aided by the brilliant master stroke of filming it in the marvellously photogenic city of Vienna, near Venice, a city possessed not only of exactly the sort of real-life architecture required as sets for *Don Giovanni* but also, apparently, lined by canals equipped with gondolas.

You see them both, these essential elements of life and water, even before the curtain is finished a dainty show takes place in which Don Giovanni shows many of the principals in the drama about-to-unfold over his glassworks, where red-hot fired objects scintillate and open ways to produce marvellously scenic clouds of steam, then you are shown a gondola gliding toward a landing with the Don himself once near the bow floating through space in the instant before the drama proper commences.

A violet Kim Te Kanawa (as Donna Elvira) pining furiously about a green carpet of lawn, following at her devotion by the Don. The marvellous close-up of her face when he approaches and the smiles and they recognise each other, she with fury, he with the specially acute enthusiasm of the philanderer caught with his pants down, as a woe.

The way a lucky producer (he is) of the Don's conquests for Leporello during the catalogue aria, folded and stacked like a mammoth computer print-out, and the way Leporello drags one end of it down a long flight of open-air steps as he sings, and the way Te Kanawa picks up a few feet of it and reads the odd name or two and registers her disgust.

Zerlina dragged into a corner by the hothoused Don with rage in mind, the whole scored unambiguously witnessed only by a huge dog lying just out of focus in the rear background.

Leporello and Don Giovanni discussing the day's agenda over the made body of the Don's latest conquest curled up on a bed.

It all adds up to as good filmed opera as you're ever likely to see, and infinitely better than most. Loris Mazzoli and the Orchestra and Chorus of the National Theatre of the Paris Opera took in a nice reading of the score which is superbly recorded and reproduced at least at Hoyts Entertainment Centre, Sydney.

Regina Ramondini, in the title role, captures perfectly the essence of bastard, rogue, lecher and nobleman that is the Don. Jose Van Dam is equally fine as Leporello.

Edith Maser is a marvellously deflated Donna Anna, Te Kanawa fares in the most convincing dramatic performance I have yet to see from her as Donna Elvira, and sings reasonably at all times.

Even if you hate opera, this *Don Giovanni* is well worth seeing at cinema. If you like it or, ya, but hate filmed opera you may be pleasantly surprised. Likewise if you like opera but find *Don Giovanni* a tough pill to digest.

The only people who will hate this film are those who detect both opera and The Film. They're crazed, but nobody else.

*Don Giovanni edition of *Opera Australia*

FILM



BY ELIZABETH
BENNETT

Breaker Morant: a triumph

Brian Benford and his producers, Alan Carroll, have gone for broke with *Breaker Morant*—taken what is already a melodramatic story right up to the brink of bathos and unattractively backed off on time, and the result is a triumph. Even to take on this strange, old-fashioned quirky story of events that seemed at the time to be simple but have been demonstrated to be extremely complex, was risk enough especially when the film had to include a long courtroom scene, as much the time of directors and actors as working with children and dogs is said to be.

There is also the fact that it is hard to make a hero of Morant, or of Peter Handcock or George Winton or really of anybody concerned either side of the political or military line. If anybody comes clean out of the *Breaker Morant* story in the Benford version, it is the defense counsel for the three men—the, in every sense, bush lawyer Major J.F. Thompson played by Jack Thompson. However, the perspective, which keeps gives the audience a chance to be sorry for almost everyone, as it can be sorry for everyone in *Apocalypse Now*, is difficult as it would be for some of the characters to see themselves as objects of pity.

It may be that the opening is a bit routine, but the crash into recurring action is intensely exciting, not on the grand scale of engaged armies but in a man to man, gun to gun, horse to horse collision that is over and done with in a minute or two, leaving the sequelae of death in a day hours, counting terribly apparent in whatever orderly state the British troops may have lived while fighting conventionally against the Boers. Morant, for the Bushveldt Carbineers, lived like jackalms, driving cattle in a drought in search of pasture. The BVC were there for many reasons, but certainly not strongly actuated by love of the

empire, except for George Winton, whose father had taught him to believe in it.

Morant, Handcock and Winton were charged before a court martial with killing Boer prisoners and murdering a German missionary. The war was getting on, the British wanted to keep on side with Germany, the "colonials" were seen to be irritating, undisciplined, and embarrassing. I wondered at times at the first use of the word "colonial" complete with accent, by the officers of the British corps, but I have to assume that the film has been researched enough to make it valid. I also wondered if Major Thomas would have made such a performance of snapping salute and right-turning when he entered the court each time. I would have thought that was a sergeant-major's kind of thing. But again, I have to believe the researcher and writers.

The courtroom scenes are beautifully presented. The room itself is a bleak place with the judges at one end, prosecutors and prosecuting officer facing each other, defense counsel hovering at the edge and in the center is a leather chair for the witness.



John J. Handcock in *Breaker Morant*

The camera picks up the extreme discomfort of the proceedings, as the second picks up the creek of leather belts, the rustle of papers and the pounding of army boots men, some someone leaves or enters. A good tradition of military behavior in its full rigidity is always impressive, and I have never been more impressed by it than in *Breaker*.

The cast is perfectly assembled for what it has to do. Edward Woodward is an actor who is able to convey an impression that he understands the pains and pleasures of real life, he can convey obsessive belief in his own rightness, hardness, yet the whole is modulated by a kind of melancholy induced by the knowledge that everything will end badly, as indeed it does.

Bryan Brown's Lt. Peter Handcock has a hard eye, a hard wit, and a hard way with women—there are plenty of them around in Australia and Brown plays him with dash. Lewis Fitz-Gerald's George Winton, who believed in the rightness of the British cause, is an endearing figure, and the one to be most sorry for, the survivor.

Jack Thompson's role as Major Thomas is a difficult one: it allows him to prove for the first time since *Caddy* and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* what a good actor he is. He has most of the big speeches in fact, the address to the judges on behalf of his three clients should be cut by half, not because Thompson does not deliver it well, because he does, but because Benford is telling us what the film, and especially the legal proceedings, have already told us.

This is a mistake often made by writers of stage and screen with reputations rather more inflated than Benford's.

Many other actors appearing nightly on television or in less attractive local films can be seen to their advantage in *Breaker*.

John Waters as a disillusioned seagoon in intelligence, Rod Mulraney as the prosecuting lawyer from a British regiment, the Royal Field Artillery, Trevor Donovon as Captain Hunt whose mutilation after an encounter with the Boers was revenged by Morant, Charles Tingvall as a stuffy Lt. Colonel the preceding edge, Chris Haywood as a witness against Morant, Vincent Ball as Colonel Ian Hamilton, aide to Kruger (and later, as General Sir Ian Hamilton, to command "colonials" in the Great War).

Thirty three people are mentioned in the credits, among them Don McAlpine for the distinguished photography. It is a South Australian Film Commission motion picture made in association with the Australian Film Commission and the Seven Network.

THEATRE/ACT



NEIL WILSON
KATE WILSON

Daring attempts

THE GLAD HAND STRAWBERRY FIELDS

by Kyle Wilson

The Glad Hand by Neil Wilson. Australian Theatre Workshop, Children's Room, Ball. Opened March 12 1988.
Strawberry Fields by Stephen Paskowitz. Canberra Theatre Centre, at Theatre Three. Opened April 12 1988.
Director: Douglas. Kate Boucher (Photo by)

The new wave of British plays of political purpose arrived in Canberra thanks to the traditional tastes of a new generation of directors: Warwick Baxter and Kate Boucher are to be applauded for their daring attempts to raise the political awareness of Canberra's stud audiences by serving their regions of manufacturing enterprises/battle with the Australian government of Neill Wilson's bizarre satirical-political charade and Stephen Paskowitz's scathing, violent vision of neo-Nazi British fascism.

Both plays are awfully aggressive propaganda and ultimately political diatribes, but Neill Wilson's is the more successful transposition of the opposed values of traditionalism and artistic quality, largely because he eschews any attempt to mask his ideological position with a veneer of traditional stage realism; indeed he bases his message in such a profusion of ideas, characters, symbols and allegory that we forget we are being propagandised. Paskowitz on the other hand seeks to convince us that his view of neo-political developments in Britain is reality, by expressing it in the form of street-life documentation. This means that audiences will be acutely sensitive to any distortions or discrepancies between their perceptions and his, so when he schematises his characters and presents a one-sided argument we perceive a moralised ballad far from of narrative.

Wilson's play is also flawed, for its

propagandistic aim is so effectively concealed by absurdist devices and scintillating humour that few can understand what the playwright is expressing; the two perceptive academics sitting next to me were baffled by it. Nonetheless, they greatly enjoyed it, for an cryptic dense texture lit by flashes of wit and spectacular theatricality.

As I understood it, on an oil-tanker somewhere in the Bermuda Triangle (the sailor symbolising the Ship of State), a generalised neo-fascist regime/autocratic Britain, is engaged in an obsessive search and destroy mission. His quarry is the Anarchist, the hope-spring of capitalist communism.



Neil Wilson in *The Glad Hand* and *Strawberry Fields*.

In Act II we watch a dirty woman, the play-within-the-play, while Britain grows increasingly toxic, seeing the imminent appearance of his quarry in a quirky and mystifying revelation: the latter arrives in the person of Umberto, the ship's Spanish cook, who tapes one of the Hooley women (pious, Latvian and totally despatched British), telling that the latter, moved perturbation on the nature of reality, I remained puzzled as to what statement was being made, but the whole was so intriguing and entertaining that it didn't seem to matter.

Director Warwick Baxter obviously has a feel for political theatre and fully exploited the play's abundant humour and farcical action. He was aided by a series of amazing performances, in particular Geoff Edwards' polished, curly and powerful integration of British bulldog yet dynamic obstacle yet wanted by demons.

However, an audience can only take so much observation and cryptic encoding; ultimately theatricality was not enough and Act III sagged. The defence of this odd, remarkable play must therefore

revert to a greater logic and clarity than its author has achieved.

Paskowitz's theme is also fascist, but his expression of it is unequivocal, over doctrinaire and far more conventional; he creates two negative characters, representatives of the ideas and attitudes he is condemning — those associated with the adroit National Front to whom he postulates a positive character, the anti-fascist of "our" more humanistic attitudes. He attempts to avoid schematisation by making the latter (initially) una traceable, but ultimately characterisation is coloured by ideology.

Charlotte, an ample repressed and frustrated middle class, bright old march and decorator, is travelling north from London with Kevin, an amiable, down-to-earth, alienated and educated youth. They are distributing agitational pamphlets to various contacts in their semi-clandestine organisation. A disingenuous cockney young henchman (Nick) attaches himself to them and by means of his probing we learn of their ultra-nationalist neo-fascism. Apparently morbidly fascinated, Nick remains with them until Charlotte realises a too-impressive policeman at which point he becomes their prisoner.

The revelation of Charlotte's and Kevin's attitudes is skillfully revealed, but we are unprepared for the murder. The final act, by both the playwrights but one suspected this, Irish Williams' interpretation, on an exclusively recorded slanted fascist viewpoint, that her abrupt metamorphosis into madhouse seemed arbitrary; we had perceived no suppressed propensity for violence. David Barnett's bewildered youth did achieve this quality and indeed dominated the production.

Kate Boucher's music score was a most skilled use of the Theatre Three stage and has not recalled her as a designer of the first rank; these compact live lines formed over a bare platform, empty save for a few deep-sea symbols of the urban wasteland. He failed to fully exploit the power latent in the two television screens, which should be really shattering in their brutality of the author's denunciations, is to compare it. The play itself is marred by a visible variety of distortion: the neo-fascist attitude is presented as the domination of sick minds and no counter arguments are offered. All we are given is Nick's credibility and moral outrage; hence the playwright's tendentiousness seems even more obvious. It is a powerful and provocative piece intelligently realised, certainly the finest production of Theatre Three of this low year.

THEATRE/NSW



STATE REP.
LUCY WALKER,
ARTS EDITOR

Up in the air

CLOUDS

by Robert Page

Clouds by Michael Frayn, Nimrod Theatre Sydney, NSW, opened April 21 1990.
Director: Neil Armfield. Designers: Emma Elworthy, Lighting: Graham Murray. Stage Manager: Michael Mansell.
Casts: Paul Brennan, Marc Jansz, Helen Ryan, Ed Mac Gillian, Angel, John McFerran, Willem, Bob Mann (Performances).

A solid run of strong local, and locally set, productions has taken the fare at Nimrod since Neil Armfield made his professional debut with *Utopia Down* as the *Believer of the World*. Audiences have been treated to that classic version of rural settlement *On Our Selection*, moved by a compelling portrait of a twilight love affair in *Traveling North* (at the Theatre Royal) and arrested by the extent of the black cultural rift of *Buller's Moon*.

Most recently, though, the company has moved into the cosmopolitan realm, with many of our winners. David Allen brought Lawrence to the "bottom of the world", but Steve Swell was destined to leave his *Travels* in mid-twentieth Russia and John Ardrey, King *The House of the Dead* Man in Goya's Spain. And now *Clouds*, written by English journalist Michael Frayn, has drifted into the theatre.

Perhaps it was chosen to leave the season after two internal plays and before we are plunged into the tragedy of the House of Atrides, but it does not seem to be of sufficient stature to be a "mainstream classic" (Penguin terminology) or to stand up to the local product, which, too, along with the trap classes, make up Nimrod policy so far as it discernibly has one.

Its subject matter is fairly straightforward: a part of people, two journalists on assignment, a committed American academic on official interpreter and a Spanish-speaking chauffeur, are followed through their brief tour of Cuba. The thrust of this play, though, are magnificently nebulous.

Just as the action is nowhere tied to a



Paul Brennan (*Clouds*)'s head, Marc Jansz (*Cloud*), John McFerran (*Angel*), Jennifer Hagan (*Wendy*) and Bob Mann (*Willem*) in Nimrod's *Clouds*. Photo: Ben Lyle

setting, but occurs in apparent real-time on a cross between a trapezoidal and cinema screen with endless closed locations projected thereupon, so the issues of the play remain up in the air.

In the play to enlighten us along the way about post-revolutionary Cuba, Frayn has after all been there as a journalist on assignment? Not really for early on his persona, Owen tells us "they're all the same these places. Graded tour of collective farms and irrigation projects" (italics and so it turns out to be).

Do we get an insight into journalism? Well there is a pontificating diatribe against Owen, on the "journalistic skills" required though when any of the characters puts flagging typewriter key the result is dithering dithering, non hard copy. Place and profession add colour but are apparently not of the essence.

What we are left with are the interrelationships between the various characters. A full blooded affair between the two journalists, Marc and Owen, they are after all of opposite sexes? Deep stirrings in the clash of lifestyle between sophisticated Europeans and the representatives of an emerging nation?

Not quite, but at least shapes are emerging in the mist. For the play does plot the meanderings of the body, usually a male depressive, somehow, through the attentions of the men. The flirtations with Owen culminate in a three-way crush-up

at the height of a women (don't be misled, this is not the heat and passion of Tennessee Williams) and subside into an implied consummation — at last! — but with the chauffeur.

I can imagine that Frayn's urbane and lightness of touch (the book describes him as a "paragon of high comedy and sophisticated farce") may have appealed to the English sense of humour, and at least risen to the level of the engaging with Tim Courtenay and Felicity Kendal in *West End* during this production never moved beyond the merely wit.

Jennifer Hagan did manage wonder, alternating melancholy with an occasional jet of vision, her dark eyes like shafts into a rich mine of creative temperament. But Paul Brennan is the priggish yet susceptible Owen and Marc Jansz as the urbane American seemed to have as much trouble getting a line on their adult characters as I did with the play as a whole. With John McFerran as the Cuban interpreter struggling to look better than a take-off of Marcel from *Fanny Hill* etc., it took Bob Mann's inter-male chauffeur to earn any marks in the men's department.

Neil Armfield simply ranked the deployment of actors called for in the stage directions, but otherwise let the play flow in its own refined atmosphere. Path *Century BC* Greece, with its wars, battles and Olympic gods suddenly seems much closer to home.

Enterprise and accomplishment

ABSENT FRIENDS MEASURE FOR MEASURE

by Barry O'Connor

Absent Friends by Alan Ayckbourn Q Theatre
Frocks 1988, Opened March 1988
Designer: Douglas Arthur Dicka, Stage Manager
Tilly Higgs

Cast: Paul Kevin Jackson, Diana Gar Anderson,
Joan Allen Best, Evelyn Brinkley Masters, Colin
Malcolm Keith, Margo, Clare Woodward.
(Professional)

Measure for Measure by William Shakespeare Q
Theatre Frocks 1989, Opened 2 May
Director: Neilson Brinkley Masters, Arthur Dicka,
Stage Manager: Ian Young Lambell.
Cast: Duke of Vienna: Don Monaghan, Pompey: Alan
Best, Escalus: Ben Gilbert, Angelo: Malcolm Keith,
Isabel: Kevin Jackson, Lucio: Barry Robinson,
Clown: Susan Butler, Mariana: Evelyn Masters,
Mistress Overdone: Elaine Nelson.
(Professional)

I've been talking off to Bankstown and
Fremont, catching up with the Q's latest
activities. Their productions of Ayckbourn's
Absent Friends and Shakespeare's
Measure for Measure offer further proof
of the enterprise and accomplishment of
this remarkable company.

Absent Friends is the Q's third Ayckbourn — *Miss the Oliver Wolf* and *Absent Friends* *Supper* were featured in previous seasons — and it was in the last
leg of its Western tour, having already
played Perth and Orange, when I saw it
in Bankstown. However, it still had the
sparkle and élan which designer-director
Arthur Dicka had infused originally into
his production.

It's an intensely funny show even
though *Absent Friends* isn't Ayckbourn's
funniest play. It doesn't play with
theatrical conventions as do *The Norman
Conquests* and *Bedroom Farce*. But
Absent Friends shares with these other
Ayckbourns his knack of exposing psy-
chological truth and the middle class's sense of
duty, even if it is a reluctant one.

The occasion of the play is an afternoon
tea at which a bunch of friends gather to
cheer up an absent friend. This is Colin
who has lost his fiancée in a drowning
accident, now he is ready to be brought
back into the fold. There is little
enthusiasm for the undertaking, however,
except on the part of the hostess Gae
Anderson's enigmatic Diana, and Clare
Woodward's professional sympathiser,
Margo — the Joanne Little of the North.
They all vow not to mention death or
drowning, which leads to the usual jokes
including the rather novel one of a Colin
who won't shut up about the tragedy. The

biggest joke of all is that Colin is better off
with his memories and scraps of Carol
whom he knew for only a year or so, than
any of his present friends. They are all in
the shabby twilight of their relationships,
putting up with friendships, boredom, dull
sex, neuroticism, and all those other
benefits of the new society.

In a generally very good ensemble,
Kevin Jackson and Malcolm Keith are
outstanding. It was therefore very in-
teresting to follow these actors, along with
some others from *Absent Friends*, into the
Shakespeare. In *Measure for Measure*, to my
surprise, Richard Brooks had chosen
Kevin Jackson and Keith. I would
have thought Jackson's great cap-
tivity would have qualified him for
Angelo, while Keith's laborer-puppy
charm would have suited him to someone

other than the icy deputy.

But this is no ordinary *Measure* for
Measure. Brooks' 'romantic' production is
very intelligent and should prove valuable
to the largely school audiences it will
attract.

The scene is still Vienna, where
Shakespeare originally set his somber
comedy, but the year is 1980. This is
nothing new. Robin Philipps used Franz
Joseph's decaying empire to update the
play some years ago at Stratford, Ontario.
I thought that was a deliciously good idea,
a clever interpretation of an unactable
play. The Q presents new and interesting
facets of the play, having to accept
sacrifices in text and theme to do so. But
the losses are almost outweighed by the
gains.

The metaphor is that of a high society



Gae Anderson and Evelyn Masters in the Q's *Absent Friends*. Photo: Trevor Connell

antagonist. The actors enter formally dressed, and they are introduced to us by name and role. That theatrical note is further sounded by the selection of hats and gowns from a large hamper which also serves as a prop when necessary. The setting in effect never changes, as if in Arthur Dicks' grand ballroom — a major achievement in the cosy Q space at Pimlico. We soon learn that the play is being presented as a game, a charade in which everybody gets a part, and some, notably Angela and Isabella, become more realistically involved in theirs than do the others.

One is never sure which the knowing smile should give way to serious apprehension. The fine line between witty pretence and harsh reality is delicately walked by the production, but I think much of the relationship between Angela and Isabella is lost. Medication and low life provide a constant background to the piece, with Kevin Jackson's fine Lennie there as a Lord of Mumble. All in all, this is a very exciting production.

Good on television

HAPPY FAMILY

by Michele Field

Happy Family by Colin Cooper. Ensemble Theatre Sydney. 1984. (Opened April 1985).
Director: Brian Young, Designer: Yoshie Terasaki/Lighting Designer: Hayes Johnson, Stage Manager: Glenn Johnson.
Dolores Delaney, JB Finch, Mark Soloman, John Chapman, Susan Solomon, Hilary Larkson, Gregory Butler. (Michael Rose) (Professional)

The excessive perkiness of *Happy Family* crowned a small book of pain squarely above our eyes. Each line was snapped off, as though it were a fresh victory cry, and like good green grocers the audience chuckled approvingly. I can take that kind of timing in a television comedy, say *Fawlty Towers* or *The Goodies*, but not as a man's laugh. Because I hit at intervals, almost anyone else in the audience — an audience of thirty, maybe a quarter of the Ensemble's capacity — could explain more about the story than I will.

I wish I could explain why we were all there. Colin Cooper, the playwright, was a BBC TV writer, and perhaps in that fact lies the secret of his rapport with the Tuesday night audience, most of whom would have been home with ABC television if the ABC had been offering anything from the BBC that night. My own conviction is that there is not one of the "media" and it should not exist in order to



Below, Larkson, JB Finch, John Chapman and Michael Rose in the Ensemble's *Happy Family*. Photo: Bruce Gars

give us "free" what is done more professionally on television and which we can watch more comfortably there.

The parents of *Happy Family* is that siblings in their relationships with one another, never grow up — a true enough premise as anyone with slow-maturing sibling relationships of his own knows. The three siblings have the surname Soloman, not a common English name so it became program with suggestion. The solace is the crisis, the turning point, and in the same sense it is the point where things stand still. In *Happy Family* it is the point when the two sisters and the brother meet again, on order to exchange or to absorb into the family a fourth would-be sibling, the young man who intends to marry the elder sister.

The interesting part of the reason is the siblings own definition of their "closeness". "Closeness" means in necklaces, in games of betting and speaking and chewing, and especially in the ritual of Owl Eyes (diamonds pressed against together with eyes squinted closed, then eyes widely opened). Each game provides a little dramatic sequence which releases the writer from the responsibility of carrying along a bigger action. In fact, *Happy Family* is a

great deal like *Lord of the Flies* without the bigger action.

The actors exert themselves to make these staped games look fun. They try to be believably snarling-pants, petulant, silly and winsome. In short, they try to make childishly interesting. The trouble with a child's range of expression, however far one stretches for adjectives, is limited. Inequationally, emotionally limited characters are one type of characterization, along with the Lears and the Cyranoes, which playwrights should give us, but it is a type of characterization that actors handle clumsily. I recently read an article which argued that the hardest task for small musical theatres is the selection of the music they're to play; it's harder to select it wisely than to play it well. Any director of amateur actors who has tried to produce a Porter play, for instance, will appreciate that a steady tone, here spoken in level voices is much harder to actors than "businesses".

Happy Family would have been a good play on television; the dirty jokes are put in that are too strong for a level level. It would have been a good play to play down, instead of playing it up as the Ensemble has done.

THEATRE/QLD



STATE REP
DON BATCHELOR

American dreams

VANITIES: ANGEL CITY

by Veronica Kelly

Written by Jack Hoffman. Brisbane Actors' Company. Premiered Nov. Opened March 26, 1988.

Director: Bruce Ford. Designs: David Gooding. Cost. Kathy. Bookends: Katherine. Jones. Joanne. Nancy. Mary. Ray. Tony. (Audience only.)

Open? Yes. In New Zealand. In New Theatre. Brisbane Qld. Opened April 1988.

Director: Douglas. David. Bill. Lighting. Bookend. Katherine. Stage Manager. Nancy. Tony.

Cost. Tony. Design. Katherine. Jones. Tony. Photo. Katherine. Book. Nancy. Mary. Jones. Nancy.

Stage. Yes. Mark. Ford. Window. Michael. McCallum.

(Photo only.)

Bushmen audiences have recently been presented with two American plays dealing with national identity, one creating its material as formula comedy and one as poetic myth. BAC's production of Jack Hoffman's 1976 Off-Broadway hit *Vanities* is, whichever way you take it, a thoroughly professional endeavour. The play is a three-hander for women: doubtless programmed for a superior stage hit as a showcase for so frequently under-used female acting talent. Sadly, *Vanities* is a women's play only in the sense that Route 66 and vehicles are dubbed "women's voices". Indeed, the play could as easily have been written in 1936 as in 1976. The plot follows the careers of three co-ed cheerleaders in the ten years from 1963, charting their progress from high school through college towards whatever personal future their past has prepared for them as they apprehensively approach the ultimate conclusions of marriage life.

Media-American stereotypes about group conformity, competition and the quest of the chic overgrow the characters' seemingly maddening alien beyond hope of individual self-development. As such, *Vanities* incidentally displays the price of the American dream of success, image projection, physical and mental narcissism and self-admiring egotism: it makes those women as empty and fragile as dolls.



Junior Skinner (Kathy Jones) and Jane Phelan (Joanne) in *Vanities* at the Actors' Company. Photo: Greg Wilson

The dominant insight is the actresses' continual perching, prancing, making up and generally traversing All-American costumes oriented sexual oppression linked with conformist tyranny and self-referent worship render the characters as female sponsors of the species. Willie Loman. Joanne, the least secure, confesses "You two are beautiful, I'm just, well, attractive."

Yet... and this is what makes the play complacent and commercial — an realisation is discernable of the attraction of personal lives and social and historical trends. The focus is kept, soap-style, on rugged cases and some moments the play has generated a TV spin-off such that one could assume that the emphasis of the play has essentially within the characters. Women are vain aren't they, and empty and trivial, so what do you expect? Kennedy's assumption, Vietnam, the use of the Women's Liberation Movement pass these characters by, while a new shade of red polish is a major event. This is no doubt true to the reality of many, and as such worth attention, but the play displays no awareness that history makes the

assumptions of the past hollow and irrecoverable. Theatrical assumptions included. *Vanities* ("a comedy of managed lives") relies on some very old formulas, not always written but about "women", the *Formal Five Variety* in the crushed blossom version repackaged as a competitive genre.

BAC's *Vanities* combines on occasion for attention with Hoffman's capital commercial handling of the material with the disavowal of being given a chance to see where the drama production industry is now heading. Providing one can overcome the resistance, the production provides many theatrical treats, crisp, stylishly costumed, and played with comic flair and precision. The cast holds to a fine line between sympathy and comic distancing, avoiding the invitation to render the female by soap-woman bylines and the latter by per Broadway formula comedy. The balanced, measured performance is a triumph for the cast, notably in the work of the wonderfully gifted Jennifer Flowers, whose interpretation of the life-saving Joanne shows a Shirley Temple character given the respect due to a great actress in

Scenario

Sam Shepard's *Angel City* at La Brea is also distinguished by important visual stylistic choices, appropriate to a play dealing with the Hollywood dream office of the American dream factory. But instead of being a play pitched up from theatrical scraps, *Angel City* goes straight out for theatre glory and achieves stunning results. There black playacting area is blocked by a vast black screen of ever-changing colours, seen through a film-rune pattern window or movie screen border; the screen is the visual metaphor of the collective national dream, a projective area for the character's fantasies, needs and mythic conflicts. The cast enters through a series of narrowly linked personas, evolving through the logic of human, writer-actor-projection and mythic compulsion. The consciousness of all the characters is attuned to the historical past of the City of the Angels and obliquely connected within its personal, strong latent present, national and Hollywood-derived strain of myth-association, surface, interior and conflict. The action sinks downwards into the city's raw mind, from its congenial present coloured with chemically lured beauty, pure first orchards, Spanish conquest, Indian ritual wisdom beyond to the unifying ultimate fear or knowledge, suggested by the latter to the West, which lives on in the city's unconscious. It is a situational expression of a community's becoming in the same in which I understand *Albuquerque* use the word.

Daniël Bell's production lavishly paints Shepard's evocative language through music, class, movement and dream-evoking light and colour values, such that the action acquires the surreal blend of detached difference and mesmerised super-presence (typical of the dream, whether personal or cinematic). The action builds as a series of images and ritualised exchanges to a simply achieved conclusion of immense poetic power, and I wouldn't consider prejudging anyone's chances of experiencing its positive impact by revealing in *La Brea's* *Angel City* is an American premiere and as such a tribute capturing the play being first shown in San Francisco in the same year, 1976, which was the beginning of the well-commented New York run of *Carver's*.

Though both plays will doubtless surface again for various reasons, *Angel City* is the one which I find potentially more suggestive and exciting for Australian drama, or for that strand involved in the seeking out of theatrical images by which a community may understand and communicate with itself and its dreaming. For the rest, the manipulation of coloured lights on the shimmering surface, there's always *London*. Which will be showing first at our local theatre?

Fresh life in comic classics

THE PLAYBOYS OF THE WESTERN WORLD: THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNST

by Jeremy Ridgman

The Playboys of the Western World by E M Sping, Queensland Theatre Company Brisbane, opened April 18, 1986

Director: Mark Rodger. Company: Mike Rodger, Chris Clark, Mike, Scott Cunningham, Greg Mason, Janet O'Neill, Michael Jeffery, Lesanne, Hodge, Pippin, Mark, Michael, David, Wayne, Dan, John, Adeline, Susan, Leigh, John, Suzanne, Paul, Cullen, Alan, John, Jimmy, David, Lee, Barbara, Village, John, Mike, Claire, Miller, Kate, Robert, Susan, Murphy, Dale, Houston.

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, TN Company Brisbane, Qld, opened April 1985

Director: John Wilson, Douglas, Beverly Hill, Kim, Margaret, Harry, Tom, John, William, Daniel, Wren, Linn, Michael, Jack, Geraldine, Sally, McRae, Lily, Michael, Kaye, Stevenson, Cindy, Rosemary, William, Alan, Peter, Lynn, David, Charles, Bruce, Paul, Michael, Susan, Elizabeth.

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, TN Company Brisbane, Qld, opened April 1985

Two items of the century come offstage in the city at the same time, both by Irish writers, constituting more than a coincidence. There is irony in the fact that, of the two major theatrical companies it should be the TN Company, colourfully identified as person "Alternative" fare, that has sought refuge in the commercial haven of Wilde, leaving the QTC to risk Sping's notoriously difficult re-investigation.

Mark Rodger and John Wilson are both inventive directors and have breathed fresh life into familiar material with subtly innovative productions. Rodger goes all out for heightened surrealism in a magnificent cut-away scheme, extremely recreated by Mike Rodger, both the

business of life and the business of comedy abroad. Food is cooked, straw flares whispering from the loft, Cherry is triumphantly rolled in an iron hip bath and Sherie Rough stands dependently at the window, her feet in the middle. Through this world begins Vernon Davies' small, busy Pippin, the potential for self-realisation swamped by the daily round and in her final cry of despair bet the rafters, it is answered by laughter of the crowd as they release their adventure — even as the events are fading into myth, as Pippin's fate is changing partially into love.

In this beautifully rendered composition individual performances are perfectly pitched and evoke memorable images, Judith Anderson's Widow Quin for example, a considerable enigma, threaded in pipe smoke, Fred O'Neill's Old Mahon, warning with painful eloquence as he has to clapped for the fifth time onto his bleeding pole and Geoff Cunningham as Cherry, reimagining consistently in a quite delicious "Sunday West" outfit passed on him by Leigh. Really, has Sping's wild but somewhat inextricable comedy been given the full it gets here.

The Importance of Being Earnest is anything but inextricable. In men and women's place, their familiarity tends to be displaced in the form of knowing, wondrous pre-emptive, gullible which gives each aphorism, each revelation. More than any other comic character, Lady Bracknell has suffered from appropriation by moderns, one is grateful to Wilson and the technically brilliant Kaye Stevenson for a subtle but quite unmistakable re-making. Her face bleached and cadaverous as a death's head, her nasal intonation as chilling as a scorpion, this Lady B is a first. And how cleverly the handle of the handbag is repeated, the infamous line is never actually uttered but is mouthed in a slow rush of disgust. It has been done before, I hope it was as effective.

Harry Scott and Duncan Wess, as the pair of Jacks, strike sparks off each other in a smooth double act. The pace of the production is very much their responsibility and it rarely falters.

Above all, this *Earnest* is the first I have encountered that acknowledges the play's origins in 1900s Decadence and thus suggests a hinterland of allusions more poignant and daring than the "high comedy" tag betokens. Beverly Hill's beautiful set scenes design works well in the first act, though the effect disintegrates with the move to scenes of more grandeur. Although languishes among cushions and awns around in silver gown, her face the sybaritic dandy rather than the proud man about town. The end of Broadway, the far-left "better life" and the submission to conformity at last make sense.



Some stars from *Albuquerque* and *Importance* Rodger in TN's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

THEATRE/SA



STATE REP
KEVIN PALMER

Relevance and fruitfulness

THE ONE DAY OF THE YEAR BODIES

By Michael Morley

The One Day of the Year by Alan Seymour. State Theatre Company of SA. Adelaide. Opening April 1988.

Director: Kevin Palmer.

Cost: Don Magge, Stephanie. A.D. Peter Cummings. Music: Tom Bushman. Props: Bill Austin. (Photomontage)

Written by James Saunders. Stage Company Adelaide SA.

Director: Brian Deacon.

Cost: Maggie, Wayne Bell, David John Poths, Kate Watkins. Music: Keith Paul Swaine. (Photomontage)

"Take the saving bit from the average man and you take away his happiness" says Rolfing in *The Wolf-Dauid*, and for all their obvious differences of setting, character and style, both *The One Day of the Year* and *Bodies* are pioneering demonstrations of the enduring relevance and fruitfulness of that theme that there can fairly be said to have been passed to European drama. Alan Seymour's play shows us the younger, 1960's generation struggling to come to terms (and better) of the hollowness of the Aussie myth, and with it, the clinging to past attitudes considered (rightly?) to be no longer appropriate. James Saunders' drawn-out comedy is both a satirical definition of the genre as well as a presentation of two couples in search of a character — or rather, one couple trying to dominate the other's newly acquired and superficially unobtainable identity. Past and present youth and middle age, nostalgia for lost experience, the insistence on "being in the living present" — both plays are explorations of these areas as well as of the less definable middle ground.

Although *The One Day of the Year* can be seen as a period piece, Kevin Palmer's production does not seek to enshrine it in the past, nor does he strive to make it emphatically "meaningful" or "relatable"

for his audience. What he does is completely appropriate to the play to call it a period piece is not to perceive or neutralise it, but to accept it — to understand that, like *Toy Doll*, it has a place in Australian theatrical tradition for reasons both intrinsic and extrinsic. The latter have to do with the social context in which it referred at the time and which it has accurately reflected in its language and view of character: the former are the play's real and obvious strengths, which certainly receive due weight in this production — closely observed characters, the authors' accurate ear for speech, but worse of the family battlefield.

If that production is an indication of the direction to be taken after Colin George's departure, then there are promising signs for the company — not least in the casting. There is no doubt in my mind that the major reason for the play's vitality and sense of reality is the presence of new (if not unfamiliar) faces on the stage. Maggie Kirkpatrick's Dot is particularly a splendid characterisation: the best performance I've seen on the stage since Patricia Kennedy's memorable role in *40 Blk. Jans*. Right from the moment

she splits her legs and presents an unflinching behind to the audience as she bends to pick something up, we know that this character is firmly rooted in observation, understanding and a refusal to flatter either herself or the audience. Instead of the caricature she could so easily have opted for, she gives us a woman who may be half-dead within, but who also half-realises that, with what's left, she has held that family together and will go on doing so. She stands apart from the other girls — or, rather, sets us a somnambule aside when the occasion demands a disturbing and even sad face, but never in her own eyes, either pathetic or pathetic.

Similar strengths distinguish Peter Cummings' Alf, together with a relishing of Seymour's abstruse writing and his gift for weaving observations through and in, what they say. If Cummings' portrayal seems to rest out on the verge of loss and the struggle to maintain dignity that the character should display, this may be partly due to Seymour's depiction of character and partly due to director/bier actor's decision. I frequently had the impression that both writing and performance reinforced Alf's role in the family



Don Magge (left), Maggie Kirkpatrick (center), Peter Cummings (right) in *One Day of the Year*. Photo: David Wilson



Pat Weston (left), Wayne Bell (center), John Noble (child) and Barbara West (right) in *Stage Company* at Bodley

as a grandfather, rather than father. If Ali was a boy in the Depression, he could hardly be more than mad (or not if that) at the time of the play. Yet Weston's physical and vocal mannerisms were most those of a man well into his fifties, and this surely tends to lessen the tension between him and his son. Hughes in these confrontations as well as edging the character towards concurrence. This was sound acting in the face of a performance which, in five minutes, had more energy and life than most actors in this company manage in the space of a year. But it was a feeling which persisted — without detracting in any way from the richness of the characterisation.

Tom Bartheson's Hughes was also a breath of fresh air. Adolescence finding itself can be a tedious game of hide and seek for an audience. Yet Bartheson delivered even Seymour's most over-the-top scenes with a composure and detachment that almost persuaded me the writing was better than it really is and the scenes with Carman really crackled along. Bill Aspin's elderly dagger Wacka was the fourth member of a strong quartet, though at times one felt that the character's stated importance verged on the trivial. BJ Cole, in what is clearly the poorest-written part in the play, seemed, like the character, to have wandered in from somewhere else (Coward, Maugham, Hartigan?). Unwondering the part may be, but to try for "factivity" (positives: head to throat, eyes averted) instead of simple directness is at best dangerous, and worst mannered and distracting. I hope it doesn't sound weird to say that, with her voice and appearance, Ms Cole has a lot going for her — a better part may provide a later opportunity to assess her qualities.

If there was one overall criticism to be

made of the production, it would be that the actors seemed somewhat compartmentalised rather as if they were giving their set pieces when called on, and otherwise not really reacting to each other. The play demands finely tuned ensemble playing, and this was certainly provided in Brian Debban's production of *Bodley*. This was marvellous playing of the highest calibre, carefully and imaginatively directed, beautifully gauged, crackling with wit and tension and underneath it all, real emotions rising and falling.

Superlatives can sound awfully tedious, especially if they're unthinkingly positive. So the serious, the cynical or the unlikely-to-be-convinced can stop here. But if there is anyone else out there — spend the rest of the year rejecting you missed four remarkable performances. Centre piece was undoubtedly Wayne Bell's volatile, sparkling and aggressive Morvyn, a role which, in lesser hands, would have seemed merely blustering and over the top, but was a fascinating display of restrained energy and technical skill. Saunders gave the character speeches that recall Stoppard's pre-occupation in their crisp and linguistic complexity — yet without the self-indulgent and punning intellectualisation. The play is just as much about words as in *Jasper and Trevelyan* but is in general quieter — that of two couples individually and together telling the account of a past marriage (act 1) and confronting each other again after a lapse of eight years (Act Two), it offers more emotions and compassion than does Stoppard.

On the face of it, it's an depressing subject, the Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice scene was boring enough in the series. And after all, can Saunders give as

much more than Pinter does in *Secrets*? The answer is an emphatic yes. By the end of the evening you feel these four people are worth knowing, that their struggles and defenses are real, that we have learnt about them and ourselves. Admittedly, Saunders' monologues and his distribution of them are beautifully managed but the performers do them full justice.

I've already mentioned Wayne Bell's towering performance as Morvyn, even at his mean aggressive and overpowering he still suggests the hurt and uncertainty at the character's centre, without ever sliding into sentimentality. John Noble's David offers a splendid foil with his low-pitched but intelligent assemblances, the sense that he has only to look at a problem for it to solve apologetically for having bothered him and go off for a kinder target. Barbara West's Anne manages to soar the line dividing line between naivete and experience, while displaying all the character's dreamy affectation with both herself and Morvyn. At the same time, she, like all the others, shows that Anne cannot be reduced to a single set of label definitions: she may be edge argumentative, tired of Morvyn's performance, but she is also alive and intends to go on looking — even (or especially) if anyone gets in the way.

And Pam Weisman's Helen is equally powerful: she too, like David, has had "the therapy" that enables her to view the world with an apparent bland placidity that is not simply unconscious but a hard-won sense of selective perception. The pain could so easily be fearless, and disemotional the quiet wife as opposed to the noisier Anne. Yet Ms. Weisman makes her both touching and strong, and in the first act she has two splendid monologues, in one of which she conveys the character's recalled sexuality with sardonic sadness while in the second, she describes with real pain an uncontrollable fit of crying. Saunders' writing at this point is marvellously vivid yet restrained: the picture of Helen confronted by an intrusive American woman, seven years after the falling apart of the various relationships within the group and breaking down, is moving and disturbing and matched by the actress's delivery.

Brian Debban's direction of the piece allows the characters space to relate to each other and to the audience and his pacing of the monologues as well as the overall rhythm is precise and absolutely right. Allowing for a slightly ragged opening on the night I saw it, this production showed that there are performers in Adelaide who can take a play and shake it and the audience to life. With a set of ensemble playing can be second from the Stage Company for their *David Farrer* then we're in for a treat indeed.

THEATRE/VIC



NESTLE BIP
N1 22554
NFI 50112

No laughing matter

THE COMEDIANS

by Suzanne Spurrer

The Comedians by Terence Griffiths. Mopla Down starts at The Playbox, Sydney April 10. 1981. Director: Malcolm Robertson. Designer: Sandra Malsack. Lighting Design: Peter Harvey and Suzanne Malsack. Stage Manager: Brian Gibbons.

Cast: Comedians: Cliff Bates, Gordon Price, William Zappa, Phil Henry, Stephen Jack, George Melkum, Stuart Simpson, Victoria Sutherland, Bob Watson, Mark Connor, Ron Chalkley, Gail Morris, John Ward, Ianie Warren, Charles Turgwell, Mr. Peter Alan Myers, Ben Chalkley, Ted Cunningham, Club Secretary, John Heywood, Patient, Ian Morrison. (Performance)

Terence Griffiths' *The Comedians* was written in 1975 and it is his first work to have been performed in Australia. Griffiths' standpoint as a writer is expressly Marxist: he is concerned to theatre as a vehicle for analysis of social change. "I don't want to live better than other people. I want everybody to live well." In *Comedians* his approach is to pose moral questions in a dialectical way about the purpose of comedy and the role and responsibility of a comedian. These issues are explored within a thoroughly naturalistic framework, right down to the clock on the wall showing the passing of the real time of the play.

Comedians opens in a sordid evening class for aspiring comedians in the heart of Melbourne; in the second act we follow the class to their first in-out at a local club before an out-of-town talent speller, and as the final act we return to the classroom where their performances that evening are assessed by the agent and their teacher.

The London agent, Bert Chalkley, personifies Griffiths' theme: Chalkley is the company man, the professional whose approximation could be the prospect to success. In his view a "good comic" goes, audiences what they want, escape, "a comic is not a necessary, but rather a supplier of laughter." Opposing Chalkley is the teacher, Eddie Waters, who believes that entertainers generally, and comedians



Stuart Simpson as George Melkum in *Mopla* | *The Comedians* Photo: Art Scott

in particular, have a moral responsibility to their audiences and themselves. For Waters a real comedian "tells us what his audience shy away from, how to express", and therefore a real joke has a liberating power and can change the situation it describes. In the middle of these two men is the class—a motley collection of working class lads on the make, for whom the chance of making it as a professional comic represents their best, if not their only, possible means of escaping their mundane jobs.

Faced with the task of performing before Chalkley, each man chooses the cost of his own success and in Chalkley's words loses his own price. Waters has offered them a criteria for integrity, but his own life as a has-been comic does not offer the possibility of a escape for success. Rather they must make their own makeshift of form and content and of the sea, against only one: Gordon Price achieves that quality. He does so in a spectacular way: a fierce performance in which he totally expresses himself—his personal pain, his rage and his class hatred—with such mastery of art that Chalkley cannot afford to overlook him and Waters cannot approach him.

Around him the other two fall into a deeper for the traps set by Chalkley and Waters. Some are destined to remain like Waters, unsuccessful good men, while others are chosen by Chalkley and will

quite possibly become as successful as he, but according to Griffiths either have will cripple them and prevent them expressing themselves. Only Price has discovered his power of self expression, what he will ultimately do with it is an open question at the end of the play.

Just as Price's performance is compelling and confronting and only incidentally funny, a similar tension of expectation works in the play as a whole. I know of no play which entails as many jokes as *Comedians* and yet the overwhelming feeling you are left with is one of sombre and relentless probing of the underbelly of humour. It is rare to see a play as intellectually demanding as *Comedians* let alone one so engaging to watch. Like Gordon Price's performance it is almost sublimely disturbing.

It demanded exceptionally agile performances from its cast in order for the argument to remain taut and in control through the play, the audience must be drawn in laughter and pulled back from it with great rapidity. It is imperative that the argument is punched home as hard as the jokes. Malcolm Robertson's direction held this balance overall, but within individual performances control seemed William Zappa as Gordon Price and Charles Turgwell as Eddie Waters gave sustained performances which were frequently startling in the density of feelings they drew upon.

Psychopathology and guilt

MANSON
THE BANANA BENDER

by Catherine Peake

Manson — The Defense Testimony by Gary McKelzie and Ian Campbell. Back Theatre Productions. Opening April 1, 1988. Directed and performed by Gary McKelzie and Ian Campbell. Presented by the Berkeley Theatre Co. (Professional).

The Banana Bender by Barry Dickson. La MaMa, Melbourne. Via, Opening April 5, 1988. Directed: Barry Dickson. Designers: Ross Brown and Robert Dickson. Lighting: Ross Brown. Cast: The Banana Benders: Lenny Jackson, Rodrick Williams. Ruth: Ruth Johnson McDonald. (Professional).

Manson — The Defense Testimony makes for intriguing theatre. At the Back Theatre of the Prism Factory, a man presented with programme notes urging us to see the testimony as a "document of modern life" — as able to shed some light on the deep alienation and the manipulative power of the twentieth century "charismatic" leader and prophet.

At this level it struggles very hard for credibility. The prevailing image of Manson as monster and the inflexible popular memory of his barbarous crimes constantly threaten to tip his carefully worded case over into the pathological, the paranoid and the Gothic.

In general, their production is one which tried to reinforce the claims relating through the testimony: "I'm just a reflection of every one of you" "I am whoever you make me" "You want a subject found, because that's what you are" and so on. It is only partly successful

Co-author and co-directors Gary McKelzie and Ian Campbell, who perform the main parts on alternate nights — assembled their text from the transcript of the trial, plus additional material from other sources. The result is a spare and local text, delivered as a low-key monologue and accompanied by only the most minimal stage business in the form of deconstructed-style glasses of water, and a taped version of life rock.

They back the entire theatre in bright light, strengthening Manson's own claim that his audience, too, is under interrogation. But, most strikingly, they present Manson as victim rather than criminal, and their "testimony" details the life of a man forcibly removed from the normal bonds and obligations of society.

Manson, we learn, spent much of his youth in prisons and reformatories. His extreme convictions about the "family", about "control love", and the uses of violence have been elaborated during years of solitary confinement. His facility with the art of pervasion and manipulation is, I suspect, supposed to be seen in the creation of an articulate and "eloquent" man to a world that has rejected him. The exercise of the personal power has become his compensation.

So far so good. But too much of the context for the original testimony is left out and one is constantly forced to rely on hazy or vague old memories for any sense of the magnitude of the crimes.

Though the mirror-image of Manson's dilemma does supply McKelzie and Campbell with a subtle dramatic device, and, no doubt, finds a sympathetic ear among audiences well versed in Laungian theory, it is never adequate as an explanation for his role in these events. In the end, the ambitious intention for this production tend to fizzle and we are left

with a document of psychopathology.

The main themes of Barry Dickson new play *The Banana Bender* are God and bananas. Launched by the playwright as "the ultimate Lenny play", the work is set against scenes, crucifixion, banana skins and pictures of asqushore religious suffering. One of these latter has an unconvincing transfixion set neatly plugged into a painted scene, the other end terminating in a boot, and some Tweed Head Banana Co. Cop boxes are scattered here and there.

Backstage a large boot is dominated by a flashing light and based on its base the message "Graft is love".

In the confines of La MaMa, all this left room for a tiny two-deck stage and played a high program on the agility of the cast. But then, so did the script.

Lenny brilliantly played by Rod Williams, is a banana bender who chooses himself as the Messiah of the Northern NSW coast. In type he belongs to that growing band of Dickson's characters whose lives are conducted along the lines of a fast-talking experimental farce. He is working class, he is eloquent, isolated and prey to the most extravagant hallucinations.

Lenny lives in a deserted flat with his communist mother Ruth (played by Ruth McDonald — who later doubles as the Tart from *Tweed Heads*) and he has much of the piece to do with between his two preoccupations with religion and sex.

Unlike these other plays by Dickson, which also tap the "absurd" premisses and dreams articulated by poverty, the main aim of *The Banana Bender* is welded to the terror, guilt and confusion which spring from Lenny's religious mania.

If the play loses some tension in the second half when the Tweed Head Tart (now, and rather strange, it is almost a relief, for the whole script tends to be played as a kind of window dressing for the performance).

Rod Williams' portrayal of Lenny is convincing to watch, but it is also a prodigious feat of timing and concentration. On opening night he hardly seemed to miss a cue.

Jules McDonald's work as more women. She is rather better as the church Tart than as mother, and in the opening scenes she seemed to have some trouble finding the energy, and the resonance which are based on the character of the elder woman.

In the end *The Banana Bender* offered entertaining and colourful theatre. If at one level it is also a serious examination of the manipulation of religious guilt, it is also messy, charming and deliciously funny. The direction by its author is probably not a good idea. It could benefit from a more disciplined hand, for it is a play where the sub-text is nearly lost in the glossing surface of gags and absurdities.



Gary McKelzie and Ian Campbell in *Manson — The Defense Testimony*

Magpie

State Theatre-In-Education Company of S.A.



BOOKS



BY JERRY
McATEER

Canadian plays — expression of a country

It has long been a credo in Australian drama that plays, in an important way, express a country — they are a means of self-analysis and self-identification. So when a, to me, largely unknown country like Canada sends over a batch of more than thirty of what are presumably its best plays it is an exciting opportunity. With few preconceptions of what Canadian life, it is a great chance to see what drama can say. One day I suppose I will discover whether the impressions of Canada got from the plays are accurate, but certainly they are vivid.

Two strong impressions are the collimation of the landscape and the importance to the playwrights of social and political forces rather than individual human ones. They've got a hell of a lot of nature over there. Not only the famous snow and ice (two of the plays contain a central image of hell which is not of ice but of water cold) but also wild geese, great forests, rugged mountains and rough stormy seas. George Ryan's *Phosphorescence of the Glacier* (1976) is a strong odd play about an old prospector and an old newspaperman who confront each other in a poorer mountain society ("contaminating the myth of the man who made the West"). They rant and argue about their dreams, their struggling and their dying while the mountain they live and work on stands waiting to destroy them. Michael Cook's *Joseph's Hole* (1975) might be a conventional "strange" domestic drama were it not for the powerfully atmospheric use of the hostile seas off the Newfoundland coast. The storm which builds throughout the play, and which sinks the boat as if it were a ship, becomes an elemental force of metaphysical power. Herschel Hardin's *Edgar Ardy and his Wife Ardy* (1969) on fact seems to use the snow and ice of the North as an image for the way southern

Sérieux- de-Dieu Betty Lambert



society treats the Eskimos. Decisively gentle and comic at first, it builds to a chilling combination as it shows the horrific ends to which the characters are driven by the social and natural harshness of their lives.

The social interest begins as an interest in the past, and particularly in the destruction of the great Indian Nations of the prairies by military and commercial colonizers and self interest. There is nothing in our drama about our aborigines to equal the scope: the prison and the clear Brechtian narrative of Hardin's *The Great Hate of Civilization* (1962), which shows the splendid way of its tale as the wacky traders destroy the Blackfoot Nation. Sharon Pollock's *Wajitch* (1971) is a conventional but very well executed documentary about the betrayal of the Sioux Nation, led masterfully by Suring Bull, when they took refuge in Canada from the American Army. At the core of the play is the dignity and real lost strength of Suring Bull himself. George Woodcock's *Six Jin Cakes For The Wounded on Two Plains* (1977) shows the unsuccessful rebellion and subsequent destruction of the Métis National by central government indifference to the activities of suspicious frontier opportunists — a breed with which we are familiar in this country. In this play the author overblows rhetorical style sometimes stands in the way, but it is still a fine subject. In a different vein Rick Nelson and Ken Dryden's *Les Canadiens* (1977) uses the world's greatest ice hockey team as a symbol for the national aspirations of Quebec. It is given particular relevance now by the referendum on separation, held on May 20, the results of which will be known by the time this is

read. Nelson shows the Canadians becoming "just a hockey team" when the Parti Québécois won power on November 15, 1976 — the people had at last transferred their nationalism from sport to political action.

The interest in social pressures also manifests itself in a number of more conventional family dramas of the sort with which we are familiar here. Ann Henry's *Fade Street* (1967) shows life in Winnipeg during a General Strike in 1919. Tom Hendry's *Pitkin Miles On Broken Glass* (1968) apart from the strength of the title image, deals in a fairly ordinary way with a young man about to leave his adolescence behind and embark on life in post-World War II Canada. James Reaney's *Listen to the Wind* (1968) reads like an attempt to recount the plot of Roderic Reginald's *Dennis* — a streamer dark melodrama — but the playwrights' play and the strong use of simple theatrical gesture, in the style of Peking Opera, may make it a strong theatrical statement about being creatively and "dreaming out".

Marc-Chaie Blais' *The Execution* (1968) is much stronger stuff. A busy and unambitious story of schoolboy murder made powerful by the imagery with which the action becomes an image for nations, and indeed evil in the world outside the walls of a boys' boarding-school. Christian Bruyère's *Ball* (1970) is a fictionalized documentary of a prison riot in 1972, and undoubtedly the best prison play I've encountered. Brilliantly structured, committed but analytical, complex but with a fast clear central action, it gives a profoundly disturbing view of how society copes with prisoners. It is the most convincing argument in any form for prison reform I have read or seen.

The social analysis becomes political in the 70s. George Ryga attempts to explore the human side of political conflict in *The Captives of the Favela* (1970) and *Seven Years to Sandrine* (1976). The first shows the conflict between a revolutionary and his lineage in an imaginary Canadian neo-lesion. The collision between them is worked out partly in terms of their different attitudes to women, which makes for "different" theatre but odd political drama. *Seven Years to Sandrine* explores small town politics and again explains it largely in terms of the personal relationships between the antagonists. Another play by Ryga, *Servant or Sarah* presents a poetic, dramatic confrontation between Sarah and an unnamed

(Continued next page)

Mona Workman

Makers of fine quality
wigs, hairpieces, boards,
moustaches, side levers
Made to Order

- Wigs for hire for commercials at reasonable rates
- For Film Stage & TV

Tel. (02) 33-6626

1st Floor, 108 Oxford Street,
Paddington N.S.W. 2021



THE PERFORMING ARTS
BOOKSHOP

232 Castlereagh Street,
Sydney, 2000.
Telephone: Patrick Carr
(02) 233 1618

We have moved

But there's still no business like ...

SHOWBUSINESS BOOKSHOP

now at our new enlarged premises

1ST FLOOR, 38-42 McKILLIP ST.,
MELBOURNE 3006
PHONE (03) 47 5761 • 4 LINES

Have selection of scripts from: English Theatre
Lund Dramatics, Play Services, Evans Bros
Samuel French, Faber, Currency, Methuen
Drama, Pub. Co. We carry Theatre Australia
After Dark, Dance Magazine, Plays & Players
Dance & Drama, Fairs & Follies, Sains
Theatrical Make up, Leather Make up. Special
attention to Mail Order Customers.

CONTACT IAN FOSTER OR PHOENIX
ATTENTION

Man, with various characters from her life
seen through her eyes becoming vehicles
for anxiety. All these plays are political in
their original viewpoint but their action
centres on personalities and on the
characters' own sense of conscience and
attitudes to political process and political
commitment.

David Ferreiro is a writer with very
strong roots in a working class district of
Montreal, Point Saint Charles, and his
work demonstrates what strength and
energy such roots can bring to the theatre.
On *The Job* (1973) and *Working To Live*
(1976) are robust, energetic, lively pictures
of working class culture in Montreal, with
an outstanding fresh use of idiom and a
great punk spirit of anger and disgust at
the society which wastes the talents and
potential of so many of its members. On
The Job the lead has an impressive strike by
three young punks and an old worker who
work in the stock room of a dress factory.
It is Christmas Eve and their anger and
violence stem as much from whisky as
from any ideologically based, conscious
revolutionary spirit.

A different sort of subculture is
examined in a Country and Western
musical, based on *Chirico*, called *Crawl
Tears* (1975) by Ken Marshall with songs
and music by a group called Humphrey
and the Dampwicks. The characters are
all young females and their losses, moods
and wiles. The *Chirico* story, particularly
the business with the handkerchief, is a
little odd in such a setting, and without
the music an enormous part of the appeal
of the play must be lost, but it is certainly
fresh and lively.

Red Langley's *Birthplace* (1974) is a
straightforward and effective account of
the astonishing career of Dr Norman
Bethune — following him from Detroit to
a tuberculosis sanatorium, to the Spanish
Civil War and ending in China where he
seems single-handedly to have organised
the medical services for the revolutionaries
during the war with Japan. It is a
stunning tale well told, and with a very
strong central part.

Betty Lambert's *Sprague-de-Dene* (1973)
(also told in a meaningless but pleasantly
suggestive bit of farquhar) is a sharp-edged
very decent comedy of modern suburban
irony in manners. It is very funny, the
action is clever and surprising, and utterly
unmistakable. There is some satire and a lot of
funnel romping.

David Freeman also explores suburban
family life, albeit of a very different kind, in
Runaway Run (1972) and *You're Gonna
Be Alright, Jamie Boy* (1974). *The Girl* is a
rather painful loveless play about a
mother and daughter who bring home a
young good-looking paraplegic. They are
all supposedly "looking for love and
finding something less". The effect is very

sorry, no doubt deliberately. At least for
an Australian reader the play does not
quite have the strength to present as a social
satire or as a tragic far lovelessness in the
world. *You're Gonna Be Alright, Jamie
Boy* — although much funnier and showing a
much more touch in guiding the domestic
squabbling interestingly, must also rely on
Canadian recognition to transcend what
some critics is a rather pointless string of
revelations.

Robert Gurik's *API 2067* is a fantastic
science-fictionary allegory of modern society.



of the sort which Rob Jaggs used to do
here. It shows a society which has lost its
life-force by becoming too preoccupied
with living long and not enough with living
well. *API 2067* itself is an object from the
past discovered by these people and which
they do not understand. It is in fact an
apple, and the scene in which a couple of
researchers discover the effects of eating
the forbidden fruit is very funny.

Even a catalogue such as this indicates
the range of subjects and style of these
plays. This review can only offer first
impressions but there is no doubt that the
Canadians have a distinctive theatrical
voice of their own which is not heard
enough over here. A recent issue of
Canadian Theatre Review which arrived
with the books refers, in all too familiar a
tone, to the influence of "Neo-Nationalism"
and "Neo-Nationalism" but it is hard to see,
on the basis of these plays, that there is a real
problem. Next month I will continue this
review with the work of three writers
whose formal approach is very interesting:
Timothy Findley, Michel Tremblay and
Beverly Smeets, as well as a few other
plays which did not find their way into this
column.

All these plays, as well as some of Israel
Horowitz, Sam Shephard and David
Rudin, are published by Talon Books,
and distributed in Australia by Currency
Press.

ACT

THEATRE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (06 45476)
CAV'S Junior Forum to Louis Nowra
June 4-7 11-14
CANBERRA THEATRE CENTRE
Canberra Theatre (06 7600) *Prisoners Days*
with John Inman June 9-14
The Playhouse (06 5408) Festival of
Australian Drama June 8-22
Canberra Gang Show June 27-July 5
CANBERRA REPERTORY SOCIETY
(06 4222)
Music Hall Wed-Sat. To July 12
FORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY
(06 4488)
Ring 48 3736 for current programme

DANCE

CANBERRA THEATRE (06 7600)
The Australian Ballet presents *The Don*
etc. To June 7

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (06 7600)
Canberra Philharmonic Society Presents
Bohème June 26-July 5

For further contact, Ryle Brown on
45 5111

NSW

THEATRE

THE ACTION THEATRE COMPANY
(02 4266)
City Black Theatre
The Abyssinian Opera by Broke and
Wright adapted by Ian Watson, directed
by Jacky Crim. Tue 5th and 12-13
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH
WALES (02 9944 1)
School Tours, Book 6A. Puppets
play for infants and primary. North Coast
June 2
Parade of Drama for infants and primary,
metropolitan area. June 2
Rock Rock Therapy Company, drama for
infants, primary and secondary. North
West and Hunter. June 2
The Parable, world of puppets for infants
and primary. Central West from June 2
The Backwater, Australian folktales for
primary and secondary. Riverina from
June 2
Adult Tours. Riverina Trucking Company

production of *The Parah-Dag* by Mick
Rodger, directed by Peter Rastley.
Riverina and Central West until June 14
AMIS THEATRE PRODUCTIONS
(069 8202)

Clare House Hotel Taylor Square
The After Dinner Show by Tony Harvey
and Malcolm Fawcett. Directed by
Peter Meredith with music by Gary
Smith. Commences June 11
Apprentice Hotel Broadway
Travel and Gender by Rick Hogg and
Malcolm Fawcett, directed by Malcolm
Fawcett, music by Sandra Kidgwell. June
June. New show commences last June.
Beach Pavilion Theatre
Mothers' Club, written and directed
by Malcolm Fawcett. Commences June 4
ENSEMBLE THEATRE HAWKINS
New production starting in June
FIRST SLICE THEATRE COMPANY
(02 1684)

The Spenser of Theatre by Donnette
Parish by Gary Baxter, directed by
Christopher with Angela Brown, Anthony
Meyers and Gary Baxter. Touring in
south throughout June

FRANK STRAINS BULL'S HEAD
THEATRE RESTAURANT (02 4621)
That's With a touch of music from the
turn of the century to today, with Noel
Rugby, Barbara Weston, Grahame
Ned Bryant and Helen Lorain. Directed
by George Carlin. Throughout June

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (02 4618)
Son of Peter, directed by Pauline, with
Roy Livermore and the Wellington
Beach Band. Throughout June
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COM-
PANY Newcastle (06 2526)

Playhouse. *Travelling*, script by David
Williamson, director Anne Perry, with
Angel Ray and VJ Rogers. To June 14
University Drama Theatre. Book 10
Paul P. M. Shakespeare, director Anne
Norton. In association with University
Drama Dept. June 14-July 12

KIRKING 11 PUB THEATRE (02 4405)
Kirkling Hotel, Kirkling's Point
The Robin Hood Plays by Percy Quinlan
& Washbourne, directed by Percy Quinlan
LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS
(026 3636)

Collate a programme of folk songs and
sketches depicting colonial Australia
directed and performed by Colin Douglas
and Tony Kantor for infants, primary and
secondary. NSW country throughout
June

Mick Jackson, traditional bush music,
Sydney metropolitan area throughout
June

Agnes Harrington Shapiro and Styles
(continues through the centuries) and A
History of Theatre secondary schools in
Sydney metropolitan and Hunter. Until
June 13

Alejandro Murria Spanish dancer for
infants and primary. Riverina and South
Coast until June 5

Arthur Page's Theatre production of
The Frog Prince for infants and primary.
North West from June 26

MARION STREET THEATRE
(066 1866)

Run for your Money, drama. Australian
musical based on the book by David
Northern and music by John McQuinn
and John McQuinn. Directed by Alan
Phelan, with Peter Whitford, Ken de
Paul, Rod Dunbar, Stephen Thomas,
Sally Baden and Carmen Tami. Until
June 21

Shed by Ryan Clements, directed by
Alan Phelan with Oline Rodell

Commences June 12
MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAU-
RANT (069 8224)

Fun Dinner by Mel Henry Wood,
directed by Alan Harvey with Allen
Harvey, Bernadette Neugebauer, Mel
Cyprien and Christine Cameron
throughout June

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (02 7688)

41 *the Loft*, which musical revue with
The Toppans, Emily and Lorraine De-
wood. Throughout June

NEW THEATRE (02 4440)

Dr. Helen's Jewish War, *Mate Joan*
A historical musical entertainment com-
posed with her fellow artists in Theatre
Workshop, London, directed by Frank
Barnes. Until June 14

How's Carol? We'll Be Here! by
Dina Fox, directed by John Armstrong.
From last June

NIMROD THEATRE (069 5047)

The Chronicle of Antiochia, translated
by Fredrick Raphael and Kenneth
Melrose, directed by John Bell, with
Carol Barnes, Ralph Cottrell, Colin Firth,
Aranthe Galani, Ken McQuinn and Anne
Valka. Commences June 16

Donna's *The Case of Antiochia*
Meanfield the women show composed,
edited and played by Cathy Downes.
Throughout June

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF
(02 7120)

The Shikl's Journey for primary schools
and *The Universal World of Jasper* for
secondary schools, both directed by Ian
Watson, with Nola Collins, David Lan-
don, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rose-
mary Jones. Metropolitan area through-
out June

Q THEATRE (067) 21 5723

Measure for Measure by William Shakes-
peare, Orange June 3-7, Bathurst June
13-14

Travelling North by David Williamson,
commences June 20 at Parrish
RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY
(069) 25 2825

The Parah-Dag by Mick Rodger, on
regional tour until June 15

Love by Joe Citty, directed by Peter
Bartley. Commences June 20

SEYMOUR CENTRE (062 0555)
York Theatre

A Year in Town by Robyn Archer and Rodden Fisher directed by Rodden Fisher with Robyn Archer. Until June 14.
de Fluxion with *Wage and Student* commissions June 23.

Evans Theatre *Adventure* by Roger Hall directed by Don Mackay, with Terry McIlhinney and Anne Phelan. Commences June 24.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (500 1448)

Errol drama workshops on weekend include playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design radio and video. Shopfront Caravan touring country towns and schools with *The Traps* by William Shakespeare and *Chaldirah* and *The Tale Plot* created by the text and directed by Errol Blue. Youth Theatre Showcase *Blair the Fair* and *Arch* *Down in a Rusty Shoe Like This* (June 6 and 7). *Seven Plays* by students from Line 4 of NSW School of Drama June 13 and 14. *Arch* *Author* goes to Rio directed and performed by Pippa Norman June 20 and 21. *A Walkman* *Yuki + Anna* performed by PACT Youth Theatre June 27 and 28.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (221 6111)
Theatre Royal
No Name No Pain, David by Bob Barber, directed by George Ophir, with Mel Gibson and Neen Hawthorn. June 9-28.

THEATRE ROYAL (221 6111)
Demetrius and Delphic from the works of Oscar Wilde by Vincent Price. Commences June 30.

DANCE

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY (2 0580)
Drama Theatre 50H

Programme 1: *Opium* and *Chlor* by Graeme Murphy, to Handel, *Invitation* by Graeme Murphy, to Richard Maiba, and *Shakespeare* by Graeme Murphy. Programme 2: *Rossini* by Graeme Murphy. Programme 3: *Chaldirah* by Roger Moreland. Directed by Paul Saliba and assisted by Joseph Scoglio. As reported, throughout June.

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2 0580)
Opera Theatre, SOH

Moscos Leros by Puccini, conducted by Carolyn Ebeling. Callano and produced by John Copley. From June 9. *The Tales of Hoffman* by Offenbach, conducted by William Reed and produced by Tim Capetance. From June 16.
For details, contact Carolyn Ebeling on 400 3045/317 1369.

QLD THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2144)

Just The Big Men by Alan Hoggard. Director: designer, Paul Sherman. June 12-13.

Midwinters by Bona Warren. Director: Irma Vandenberg. Saturdays, 2pm.

LA BOITE (36 1623)

The Man From Maridanger by Dorothy Hewett. Director: Graeme Johnson. To June 21.

Children by David Allen. Director: Malcolm Blacklock. June 27 - July 19.

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE
Ring 16 1745 for current programme.

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL
(221 5980)

On tour QTC Secondary Drama Commissioned by Nick Hall, director.

David Nathan
Jack Galtier (student) *Papaya and The Bird*

Teat and Boyer *The Dream Team*
Wayne Roland Brown *Samuel Terrell*

QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5845)

MILO Theatre *Richard III* by Shakespeare. Director: Alan Edwards. Designer: Graham Moran. with John Kruemel. To June 14.

TN COMPANY (22 5880)
Current Box Theatre *Samuel Conference*

by Robert David MacDonald. Director: John Mober. Designer: Stephen Ames, with Judith Anderson. To June 7.

Waiting For Godot by Samuel Beckett, director: Rick Bingham. Designer: Stephen Ames, with Geoff Cunningham.

Duncan Wase. June 11 - July 5.

DANCE

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH BALLET (36 3029)

On tour *Grandes Fanciulli* *La Peri* and *The Redoubt*

HER MAJESTY'S (221 2775)
The Australian Ballet Schools Performances. June 16 - 28.

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 1125)

On tour with Qld Arts Council. Current, photography: Harold Collins. Design: Mike Bridges, Jennifer Carole.

QUEENSLAND MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY (36 3659)

On tour. Programme of modern and contemporary works by Ben Vason.
For details contact Paul Barber on 36 0011.

SA THEATRE

ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITIES
TWO 4782 (222 8610)

Communities Theatre *Heartland* *The Parks* Commences Centre at Angle Park. June 14, 15, 16 all day.

FESTIVAL THEATRE (31 0021)

Evna by Ruz and Eliza Webster, with Jennifer Murphy, Peter Carroll. John O'Day. Until June 14.

STATE THEATRE COMPANY (31 5151)

Playhouse *The Three Sisters* by Anton Chekhov. Director: Colin George.

Designer: Hugh Coleman. To June 7.

The Floor by Alan Seymour (award premier), director: Kevin Palmer. Designer: Vicki Boncher. Sat, June 13-28.

Q THEATRE (221 3651)
89 Halifax Street.

The Theatre Game by Constance Cox. Director: Frank George. June 14 - July 12. Wed-Sat.

SPACE THEATRE (31 0021)
Festival Centre. D&H Holdings presents.

Waste of a Simple Man by Charles Dyer. June 4-21. Saturdays at 1.30 pm.

THEATRE GUILD (22 5435)

Unser Hall. *The House of Dorian* by Anselmi, director: John Vile. June 11-28. Wed-Sat.

Unser Town Hall Theatre. *The Absurdity* (short Peter Brock). 2pm and 8pm. June 17-19. 24-26. July 1-3.

OPERA

STAIR OPERA (32 1368)

Opera Theatre *Don Pasquale* Director: designer: Tim Ingwood. Conductor: Myer Friedman and Jon Draper. June 26-28.

July 1, 3, 5, 10, 12.

For details contact Helen Bell on 221 0011.

TAS THEATRE

ILLUMIN CIRCUS THEATRE

COMPANY (085 815176)

The Prince (a Warsaw play)

John Carroll Theatre, Devonport, June 3-14

Lanterns TCME, June 20

Burnie Civic Theatre, June 28

Rosny College, Hobart, July 3-4,5

POF 14:00 PM TUE 47.81 (24 886A)

Rehearsal Through June for Rehearsal and Goldwyns Art Dead by Tom Stoppard

SALAMANCE (24 5259)

Company in rehearsal with playwright in residence John Lurie and guest director Richard Dancy, working on various programmes for Scouts and Community

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6256)

Golden and Yellman Society *Paras of Frenchie* June 10-21

For more contact Anne Campbell on (094) 67 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (343 2678)

Concord on *Concord* by the Munich Musical Theatre Company, 8pm June 3-8, 10-14. Saturday Club - different series of plays suitable for school children

ARINA THEATRE (24 9467)

Schools Programme: *Where To Turle?* *The Whistle* - *The Biggest Thing That Ever Dred* - suitable for Upper Primary and Lower Secondary students. Extensive Community access drama classes

ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (329 4353)

Eleonore by Roger Hall, directed by Don MacLay. Touring Brisbane (Twelfth Night Theatre) through June

Caribou by John Rosewell, with Bruce Spence

Australian Dance Theatre

At No Arc by Beverly Dunn. On tour through June

Madness More Theatre Michael Praeger

On tour through June to primary and secondary schools

Plans by Alan Hoggard

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (M7 7133)

Back Theatre: The Governor's Measure Theatre Group under the direction of Ray Mooney are presenting three short plays in June

First Theatre: APQ Ensemble act (not programmed)

COMEDY CAFE

With Red Quatlock and Company

COMEDY THEATRE (8614993)

Star Four First And Third Of England 8 pm nightly through June

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE

Touring Schools programme

FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (413 787)

Some seven shows are planned for June but programme is yet unannounced

HOPIA THEATRE FOUNDATION (834 888)

Playbox Upstart: *Witnessed* by Canadian playwrights Mark Tremblay. Director Murray Copeland, with Robert Essex and Vernon Wells. Tue-Sat 8.15pm, June 3-28

Playbox Downstart: *Outside In* by Richard Harris. Director Charlie Gorman, with Kerly Child, John Blake and John Wood. Mon-Sat 8.15pm through June

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663 3311)

Pussie Topp with John Innes. 8.15pm nightly through June

LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6126)

Just Shit from America with Jane Clifton as company

L.A. MAMA (336 4243) (280 9446)

Paras by Michael Heath directed by Colin McColl. May 22-June 8

The Duet by David Porter directed by Jean-Pierre Mignen, with Bruce Kellor. June 12-29. Thursday-Sunday 8.30pm

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (854 4000)

Russell Street Theatre. *Seen* by Martin Sherman, directed by Bruce Mylin. June 4-August 2

Athenum Theatre: *Rehearsal* and *Goldwyns Art Dead* and *Paras* in repertory. June 3-7 (Mon) June 9-14 (Mon) June 16-21 (Mon) June 23-28 (Mon) and on June 14, 18, *Paras* 2pm

followed by *Rehearsal* 8.30pm

Athenum 2: *Brave Coffee* and *The Sachs*, two new German plays by Rainer Werner Fassbinder. May 3-June 28

Schools Days: June 4, 11, 18. *Paras* (Athenum), June 26 - *Paras* (Sunday of Power) of World War One (Russell Street)

PILORIM PUPPET THEATRE (818 6650)

Clean Streets and Things by Ben Cooper

THE MILL COMMUNITY THEATRE (953) 22 2311

Race Across The Desert - a version of Brecht's *Emigron and The Race*, directed by James MacGraghy - available for tour to schools etc in June

Coming in August - *The Clock Company* papers an historical documentary theatre play about Orlong

Mid Nights - company theatre activities every Thursday, Night (7.30-10pm) at The Mill, Parkington Street, Newcown, Orlong

For more contact Suzanne Spencer on 387 3853

WA

THEATRE

HAYMAN THEATRE (388 7036)

4 Doll's House by Ibsen, director Denise Young. A Theatre-Go-Round production. June 17-28

THE WHOLE IN THE WALL (381 2401)

Murder by Carlo Goldoni, director, Raymond Quinlan. May 26-June 21

The Misanthrope by Moliere, director, Edgar Metcalfe. June 23-July 19

THE MAGIC MIRROR THEATRE COMPANY

Withed Jack Pab show directed by John Ashes. On tour North West and Darwin. May 26-June 13

PLAYHOUSE (325 3500)

National Theatre Company. Play by Pam Gross, director, Stephen Barry, with Judy Davis and Jean Sydney. May 29-June 21

Under the Roof by Dylan Thomas, director, John Milson. June 26-July 19

THE TEAM. *Dooley* by Richard Talloch. For lower primary

Madison Martin by Richard Talloch. For upper primary

DANCE

HIS MAJESTY'S THEATRE (333 6188)

WA Ballet Company at Gala opening of the theatre. Four ballets. Spanish by Barry Mortland, *We Are Together* by Don Ashes, *The Fencer* by Garth Welch,

Concerto Grosso by Charles Crane, artistic director. Garth Welch with the Army's Quartet and the Wagons Ensemble

WA ARTS COUNCIL (322 6764)

WA Ballet Company North West tour. June 16-28

WA BALLET COMPANY

Workshop Wanneroo in residence. June 9-14

OPERA

WA OPERA COMPANY

the Marny's Theatre (328 6522)

La Traviata by Verdi, musical director, Gerald Knig, designer, Graham McLean,

producer, Giuseppe Bartolozzi, with Margaret Haggart, Gae Zanczare and Carmela de Munk. June 13-28

For more contact Joan Ashes on 294 6679

FORTUNE THEATRE, DUNEDIN

Director

The Fortune Theatre Trust Board invites early applications for the post of Director for its small professional company.

The Fortune, under its original Director, has made steady progress in its first six years, is now solidly based in its own 240 seat theatre and receives excellent community support.

The position offers unrivalled, but challenging, creative and administrative opportunities. Initial salary depends on experience, future salary on results.

Responsibility is to the Board for all aspects - budgets, programmes, productions, tours, schools, administration etc.

Applicants should have New Zealand experience in all these - particularly working within limited budgets and should preferably be available to work with the outgoing Director by June, 1980. Later availability will not disqualify. Further details from and applications to

**The Chairman,
Fortune Theatre Trust,
P.O. Box 6061,
DUNEDIN
(New Zealand)**



- Dance Theatre of Harlem
- Graeme Blundell on Melbourne to Sydney
- Freddie Gibson & the Theatre Royal



THE SPIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD No. 24.

Name _____

Address _____

Across.

1. Pierced stem somehow found in a forest (4)
2. Employed the verbality (Down) (4)
3. You'll get flowers if you knock in (rhyme) (6)
4. Legal locale? (4)
5. Relations of 1 shown leaving the province (7)
6. Consider the last word round the parish (4)
7. Dismissed can give rise a right royal favour (6)

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Australia:

- \$21.00 Post Free for twelve issues.
Give a gift subscription — and SA/VE!
\$36.00 for two subscriptions.
\$25.00 for institutions.

Overseas:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Surface mail | A\$10.00 |
| Institutions | A\$15.00 |
| By air | |
| New Zealand, New Guinea | A\$10.00 |
| U.K., U.S.A., Europe | A\$15.00 |
| All other countries | A\$20.00 |
- Add \$12.00 for institutions to air mail rates.

Bank drafts in Australian currency should be forwarded to Theatre Publications Ltd., 40 Elizabeth Street, Mayfield, N.S.W. 1564, Australia.

17. By the by: Father friendly left the child's top island (4)
18. Large, retired water will lead you on the gullies (4)
19. "See the eternal" must not be To cast of (rhyme and rhyme) (4)
20. Push along, but not by the previous (4)
21. See him in one morning, with a little (4)
22. "I'll stand" (not a strongly rhyming) (4)
23. Fifty abandon their way in a church (4)
24. "Rumor" "Came" "Came" "Came" "Came" "Came" (4)

Down:

1. Baby statement by the sound of a (4)
2. Consumes a endless post (4)
3. Drink that brings the (and round) in (4)
4. Finding to group international understanding (10)
5. Old name of 12? (4)
6. Fast around the round, golden girl, and enjoy voluptuously (10)
7. Putting down the curved, strong, (4)
8. Advertisement for a (and) we have (10)
9. Points attack from (4)
10. The German drink and the French have (4)
11. on you the French with this (4)
12. He follows the path of a road (4)
13. Across the (and) in (4)
14. Bring down before the volume (4)
15. Performer (4)

Last month's answers:
The first cannot only down on June 25 will receive one year's free subscription to Theatre Australia.

